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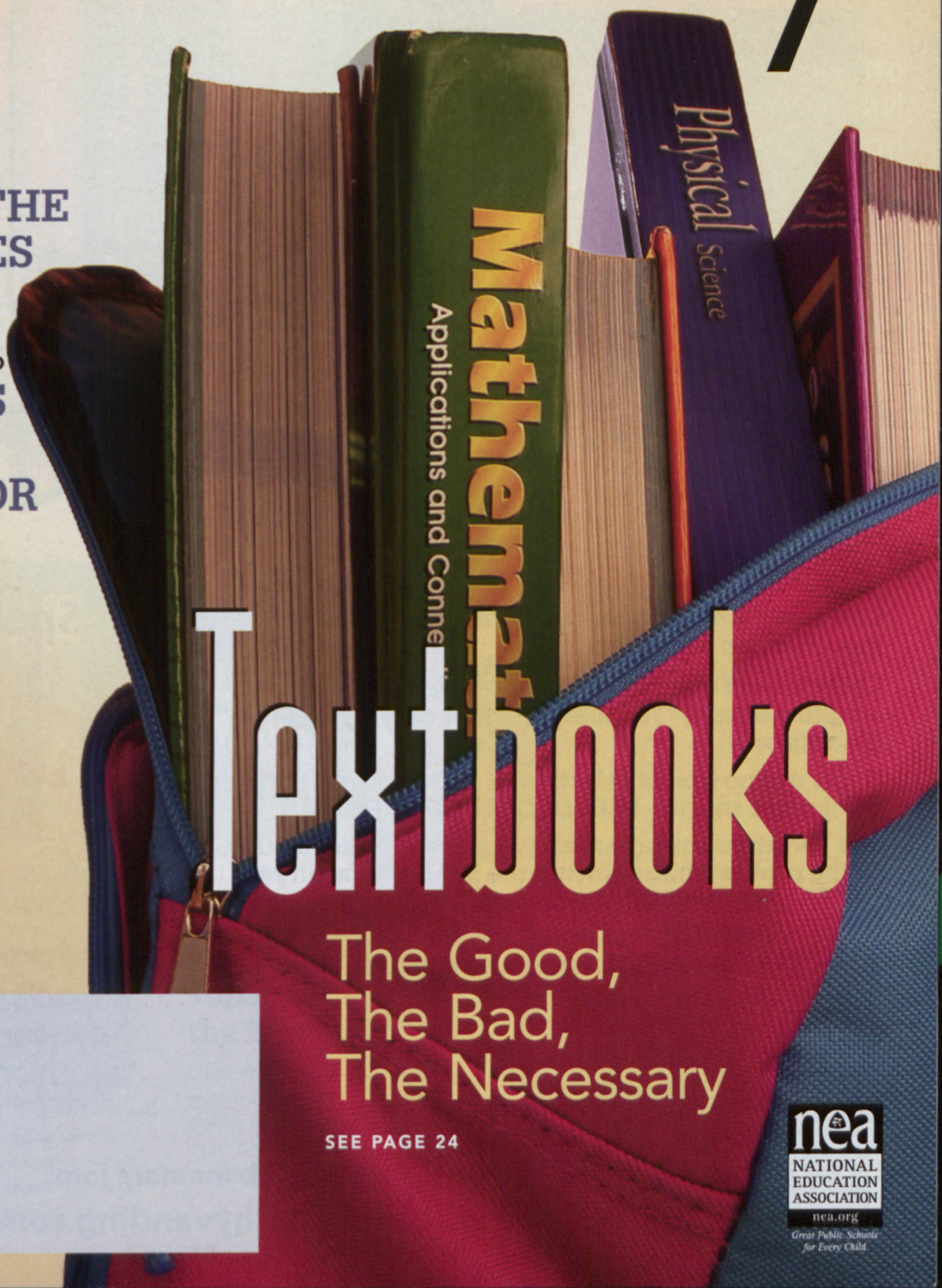

Textbooks

The Good, The Bad, The Necessary

SEE PAGE 24

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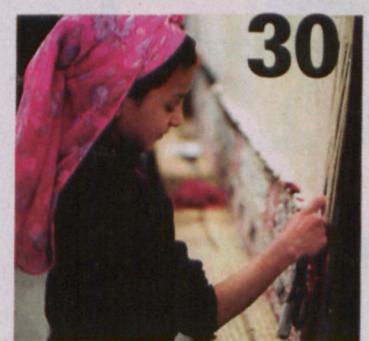
24 | TEXTBOOKS

The Good, The Bad, The Necessary

COVER STORY Textbooks can save you precious time, but they can also be bland, boring, or even wrong. Find out how some teachers try to get the best out of their books while avoiding the worst.



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Educators are stepping to a new beat, making use of hip-hop music to engage their students.

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Merry...? Happy...?

If teaching the holidays has you at a loss, don't fret. We have ideas for making it work.

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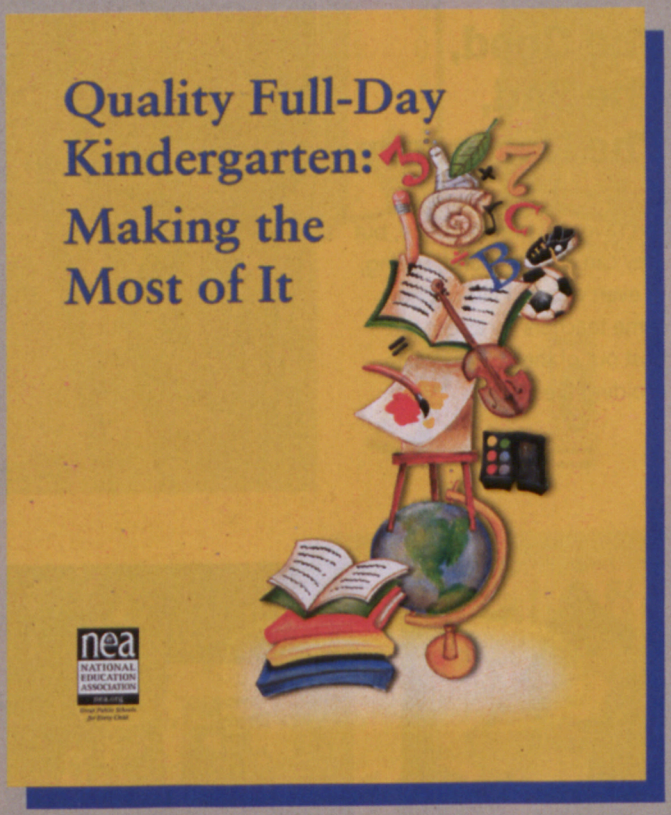

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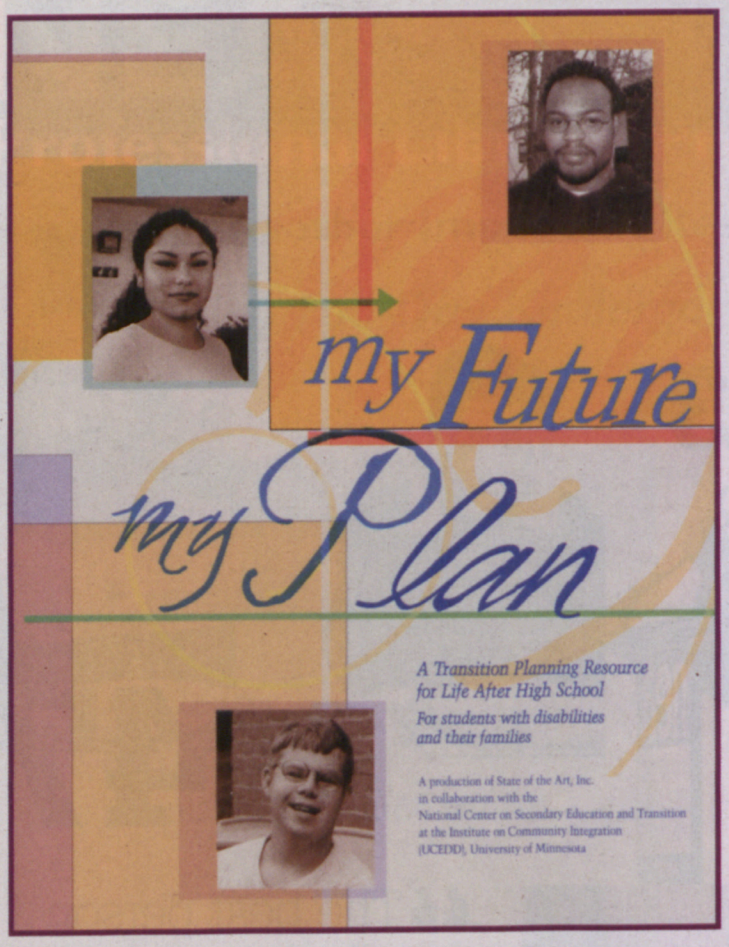
PHOTOS PAGE 1:
COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.; SYNDICAT NATIONALE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT; MICHAEL MCCLURE; IMAGE100/CORBIS; ILLUSTRATION: DAVID CLARK

PHOTOS PAGE 3:
COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP: MEIKO ARQUILLOS; RICK RUNION; T.R. ESQUIVEL, JR.; MILLER STUDIO; PAUL SWENSON


my Future
my Plan
A Transition Planning Resource for Life After High School
For students with disabilities and their families
A production of State of the Art, Inc. in collaboration with the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition at the Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD), University of Minnesota

Available in both English and Spanish, *My Future My Plan* is a "must have" resource for special and general education teachers, families and students.

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- A 36-page companion guide to the student workbook with suggestions for teachers and family members on how they can support students in the transition planning process

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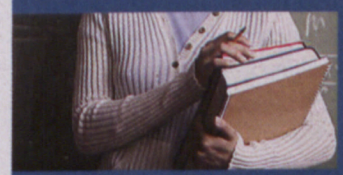
TOP CLICKS



Textbooks. Love them. Hate them. Can't do without them?

Find links to a survey on teachers and textbooks, examples of how textbooks are selected, and more. **www.nea.org/ref?textbooks**

On the Rez

For American Indian students at a reservation school, learning about their past is key to their future. **www.nea.org/ref?rez**

A Day in *Your* Life

Your work day is rewarding, hectic, frustrating, and fantastic all at the same time, right? Well a picture is worth a thousand words. Send us your favorite snapshot or two from a day in your life as a teacher or support professional. We plan to publish the best later this year in *NEA Today*. Visit **www.nea.org/ref?photos**

POLL

Do you share your classroom duties with another teacher? Here's what nea.org visitors had to say:

Yes	No
43%	57%

The concept of co-teaching, which often pairs a grade-level or subject-area specialist with another teacher, usually an English Language Learner (ELL), special education, or other remediation specialist, is on the rise.

NOW YOU'RE TALKING

How many hours do you spend at your job?

I usually arrive at school around 7:30 (1 hour before contracted work time) and try to leave at 4:30 (1/2 hour after contracted work time). Obviously, it varies depending on what is going on and what you need to get done.

How do you handle student swearing?

I typically say, "If it's not something you would be happy to repeat in church to your grandmother, don't use it here!"

JOIN YOUR COLLEAGUES IN A DISCUSSION at www.nea.org/forums.

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talk back

What about the environment?

Wow. After reading "What's Your Issue?" (October, cover story) I was shocked and quite frankly depressed to see how few educators listed the environment as a major issue of concern in the upcoming election. Even so-called "primitive" cultures understood that you must take care of the land that provides everything necessary to sustain life, yet in modern times we are so disconnected from our sources of food, water, and shelter that we allow horrible abuses to endanger the very health of this planet.

Teachers represent the educated segment of the population. If we can't figure it out, act as role models, and pass on that basic, primitive wisdom, then I truly fear for humanity. If we want to really help our students in the future, we must fight for the environment today.

ERIKA THORSEN
Bellingham, Washington

Medicated kids

Thanks for the information about students on medications ("Overdose," October). I'm in a class with at least two children on ADD medication and the parents constantly ask me if the "dosage should be upped." I hate that question. I consider myself to be quite savvy at WebMD but not at diagnosing medical conditions. Your article gave me the right language to use when dealing with these conversations. I can say, "I'm a good observer of his/her symptoms and I can document any behaviors and possible triggers for you to discuss with the family physician."

LAURA M.
Waldorf, Maryland

YouTube is a weapon

Good teachers have lost their jobs and will continue to lose their life's work because of what angry students post about them to "get even" ("Smile! You're on YouTube!" October). I'm grateful that I got out of the classroom before this "lethal weapon" could be used on me. I can look back on my students with affection and humor because they didn't make a national laughingstock of my occasional bouts of annoyance.

LOLA F. FRANKS
Wooster, Ohio

Fight for world languages

It's amazing to me that we do not see learning languages as a core part of education in the United States ("Finding Our Way with Words," October). Two years ago, German almost got cut from our district amid budget cuts. Only with community support, a sensible school board, and some media coverage were we able to avert disaster. I believe that learning about other languages and cultures helps us to deepen our awareness of other cultures and teaches us to be more accepting of others. Isn't that a lesson worth fighting for?

TOM WILKINSON
Mount Vernon, Iowa

Support the issue, not the party

In "Beyond the White House," (Upfront, October) you say Sen. Susan Collins of Maine has a "fine" record, but you are willing to throw her away to help Democrats win more seats in Congress. NEA should try supporting education supporters wherever they may be, and not be such lap dogs for the Democrats.

MICHAEL D. LAMB
Klamath Falls, Oregon

CORRECTIONS: In the article "Finding Our Way with Words," we incorrectly cited 1952 as the year that *Sputnik* launched. The correct year is 1957.

In the article "The Border/La Frontera" (September), Brownsville was incorrectly identified as the easternmost city in Texas. It is the southernmost.

NEA Today (ISSN 0734-7219) is published six times a year in September, October, November, January/February, March/April, and May by the National Education Association, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3290.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *NEA Today*, Attn: NEA Financial & Membership Services Address Change, Suite 420, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: (202) 822-7065.

NEA Today is mailed to all NEA members as a benefit of membership. Nonmember subscription prices: $65 for institution subscriptions; $100 for individual domestic and foreign subscriptions. For members, subscriptions represent $4.55 of annual dues.

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LET'S TALK

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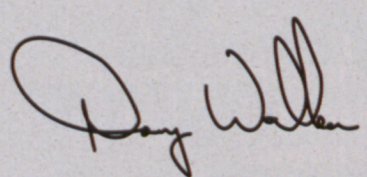
By Fax: (202) 822-7206 *Letters are edited for length and clarity.*

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER

As this issue goes to press, we're counting down the days until the nation selects a new President, members of Congress, and numerous local and state office-holders, not to mention various policies via ballot initiative and referendum. On election day, make your voice heard—VOTE. And compound your impact by volunteering for the candidate of your choice—even if only for an hour or two. ¶ If you've not settled on a candidate, please give serious consideration to the friends of education that educators in your local and state Associations and the NEA have recommended, such as Barack Obama for President. Visit **www.nea.org/educationvotes** for the latest on education in the campaign. With our votes, we can make a difference for our communities and for the students we serve. ¶ And for a little inspiration about the power of acting collectively, check out this month's features on child labor and American Indian education, which remind us how just a few of us can make significant change in our students' schooling and in their lives.



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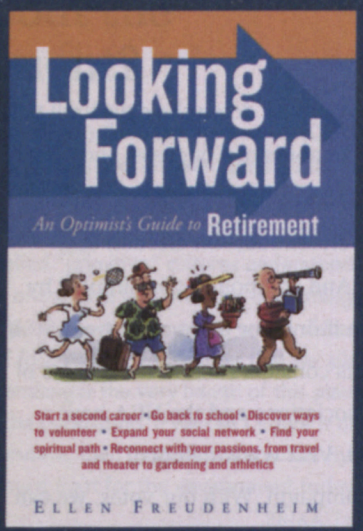
What are you looking forward to?

Most of us dream about the day we can retire, but few actually plan for the day after. Thanks to increased life expectancy, you could have 20 to 30 post-retirement years to enjoy.


Looking Forward
An Optimist's Guide to Retirement
Start a second career • Go back to school • Discover ways to volunteer • Expand your social network • Find your spiritual path • Reconnect with your passions, from travel and theater to gardening and athletics
Ellen Freudenheim

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THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

We, the members of the National Education Association of the United States, are the voice of education professionals. Our work is fundamental to the nation, and we accept the profound trust placed in us.

OUR VISION

Our vision is a great public school for every student.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to advocate for education professionals and to unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.

OUR CORE VALUES

These principles guide our work and define our mission:

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY. We believe public education is the gateway to opportunity. All students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character.

A JUST SOCIETY. We believe public education is vital to building respect for the worth, dignity, and equality of every individual in our diverse society.

DEMOCRACY. We believe public education is the cornerstone of our republic. Public education provides individuals with the skills to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy.

PROFESSIONALISM. We believe that the expertise and judgment of education professionals are critical to student success. We maintain the highest professional standards, and we expect the status, compensation, and respect due all professionals.

PARTNERSHIP. We believe partnerships with parents, families, communities, and other stakeholders are essential to quality public education and student success.

COLLECTIVE ACTION. We believe individuals are strengthened when they work together for the common good. As education professionals, we improve both our professional status and the quality of public education when we unite and advocate collectively.

TIME FOR AMERICA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM TO WAKE UP

Students today live in a wired world, and most of them are adept at using computers to find information, play or upload video clips, and even create personal Web pages.

The digital age has dawned, but too many of our schools still rely on models from 1908 to meet the growing and changing needs of the 21st century. Simply put, many of our approaches are outmoded and out of touch, which makes it harder for educators to challenge students and hold their interest.

NEA is a firm proponent of providing all children with the critical, intellectual, and personal skills they need to be successful in the 21st century. This is why we serve on the board of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21)—a coalition of business, education, community, and government leaders focused on infusing creativity and innovation into K–12 education.

The fundamental belief of this partnership is that as the world is flattening out, it is imperative that our students are equipped with skills that reach beyond those required for a simple multiple-choice test. Our nation will need students capable of filling emerging job sectors like robotics, biotechnology, and microelectronics. And frankly, if we fail to move our students up the value chain by staying competitive, these jobs will simply go elsewhere.

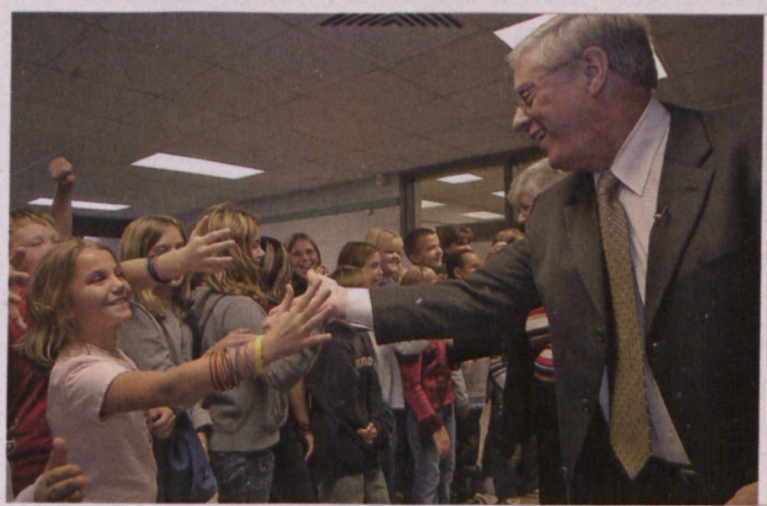
As other nations around the world strive to improve their schools to create global citizens, the education conversation in America is dominated by an obsession with math and reading tests. This is a dangerous approach in an increasingly competitive global economy. We are clearly failing to do all we can to prepare our students to enter the 21st century workforce and secure our place as a world leader.

A national poll conducted recently by Public Opinion Strategies and Peter D. Hart Research Associates on behalf of P21 found that 88 percent of voters believe that schools can, and should, incorporate 21st century concepts such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills, computer and technology skills, and communication and self-direction skills into their curriculum.

Clearly, we have aimed too low at a time when the stakes are too high. We're not going to get the students we need unless we change what and how we teach. This month's cover story is just one example of this challenge.

It is inconceivable that textbook selection and purchasing decisions are made without the involvement of teachers. The current system is terribly shortsighted and robs the real experts—classroom teachers—of their ability to fully harness the imagination of our students and help children acquire the skills necessary to prosper in the future. In my view, this spells more resistance to change and more of the same unrewarding outcomes in America's public schools.

We have absolutely no idea what the world will look like in the next 100 years. The only thing we know for certain is that the pace of change will continue, and probably even accelerate. It is our job to prepare our students to adapt and meet whatever challenges they might face in the future. We can't do that by living in the past.



> "NEA is a firm proponent of providing all children with the critical, intellectual, and personal skills they need to be successful in the 21st century." —DENNIS VAN ROEKEL

Dennis Van Roekel

NEA PRESIDENT DENNIS VAN ROEKEL

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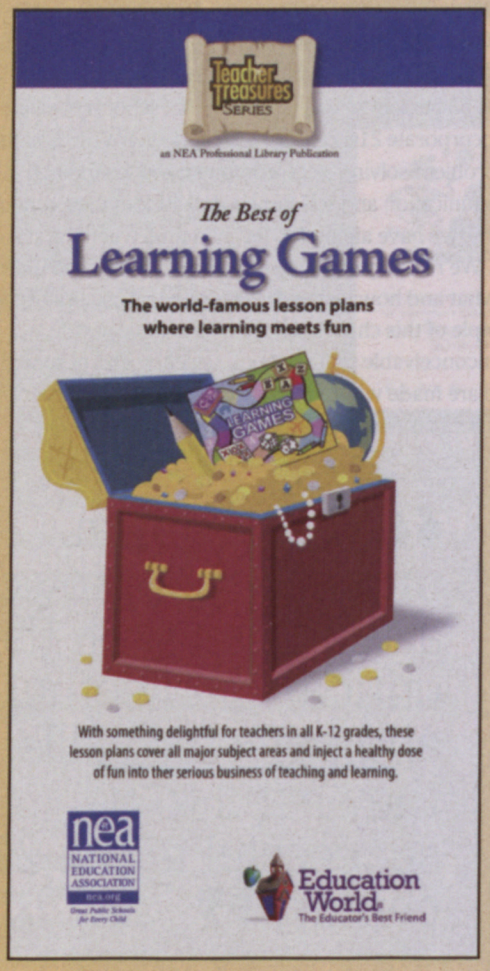
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What was your most memorable gift?

Over the years, my students have asked how old I am, and I always say, "I'm older than dirt." My 7- and 8-year-olds then wonder, "How old is dirt?" The gift I most remember is a card with a drawing of a big pile of dirt on the front and another pile of dirt with flowers growing out of it on the inside. On the front the card said, "You might be older than dirt..." and on the inside, "But your love for us and teaching have helped us grow!"

JOAN CAMPE, *Brooklyn Park, Minnesota*

One evening near Halloween, my phone rang at 1:30 a.m. It was a former student cramming with a study group for an exam on Thoreau and Emerson. I put on a pot of coffee and for about 45 minutes answered questions shouted by the group. I hung up to a chorus of thank yous. On Christmas night my doorbell rang. There sat a gift-wrapped case of my favorite beer with a card, signed "Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau."

CARY G. SHANER, *Robesonia, Pennsylvania*

One of my third-graders stood patiently next to me as I opened her gift. Inside was a pair of dime store earrings that looked like pumpkins with smiley faces. They were very well worn and I was concerned they weren't hers to give. "Stephanie," I asked, "are you sure you want to give these to me?" "Oh yeah, sure," she replied. "It's OK. I don't wear cheap jewelry."

LIBBY ANDERSON, *Amherst, Ohio*

A family recently gave me a collection of paper clips in the shapes of hands, feet, thumbs-up fists, stars, and hearts. Along with the clips came a note that stated, "Thank you for lending your students a 'hand' in keeping their 'feet' on the right path, always making them feel like 'stars,' and freely offering them the encouragement of a 'thumbs up' when they succeed. You have done all of this with a 'heart' that is kind and generous."

DEBRA HOTMAR, *Jackson, New Jersey*

The gift that touched me the most was given to me following the sudden death of my older brother. At the end of the memorial service, I was standing at the front of the church. As the crowds cleared, I looked to the back of the room, and standing there quietly were two of my students. I didn't know how they had found out about it. They simply showed up to support me.

GLEN SMELTZER, *Paso Robles, California*

The most memorable gift I ever received was a comment written by an eighth-grader on an evaluation: "I know it sounds weird, but I feel like I became a better person."

NANCY ANDERSON, *Northampton, Pennsylvania*

On the last day before break, I began opening the gifts my second-graders had piled onto my desk. As I made my way to the bottom, I found a gift that had obviously been wrapped by a student. As I unwrapped it, a note written in pencil fell out. "His name Tom. Now he is yours." Sara had given me her own gently worn teddy bear! When I got home, I told my husband about the bear and said I wanted to do something special for Sara. He replied, "Apparently you already have."

NANCY KARPYK
Wierton, West Virginia

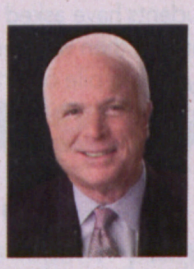
What has been your greatest success in the classroom?

TELL US, IN 150 WORDS OR LESS. PLEASE USE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES AND ANECDOTES, AND WE'LL CONSIDER YOUR SUBMISSION FOR AN UPCOMING ISSUE OF *NEA TODAY*. VISIT WWW.NEA.ORG/FORUMS OR EMAIL CINDY LONG AT CLONG@NEA.ORG.

PHOTO: NEWBROUGH PHOTO

2008 Presidential Candidate Comparison

Last month you told us what issues you'll be thinking about as you go to the polls. Here's a look at the candidates' positions on several key issues. For more details on the sources of their positions, visit www.nea.org/educationvotes



ISSUE	Barack Obama (D)	John McCain (R)	NEA
Pay teachers a minimum starting salary of $40,000 and education support professionals a living wage	Supports	No public information available (Sen. McCain did not return NEA questionnaire)	Supports
Overall approach to health care reform	Would establish new private/public health insurance programs based on the federal employees health plan and Medicare models and made available to every American	Would provide tax credits to encourage Americans to buy health insurance on their own	NEA supports a national health care policy that will mandate universal coverage with the highest quality health care at the lowest possible cost.
Tax employees' health benefits	Opposes	Supports	Opposes
Supports health care reform built on current employer-based system	Supports	Opposes	Supports
Proposes that employers must cover employees' health insurance or pay a tax	Supports	Opposes	Supports
Proposes universal health insurance coverage goal	Supports	Opposes	Supports
Sponsor bill to repeal GPO/WEP (Government Pension Offset/ Windfall Elimination Provision)	Supports	Opposes	Supports
Privatize Social Security	Opposes	Partially supports	Opposes
Private school vouchers	Opposes	Supports	Opposes
No Child Left Behind (NCLB)	Reform	Tweak	Overhaul
Reduce class size	Supports	Opposes	Supports
Pay teachers based on student test scores, pay teachers based on other factors ("merit pay")	Opposes traditional pay for test scores, but supports some forms of enhanced compensation	Supports pay for test scores	Opposes pay for test scores, but supports some forms of enhanced compensation
Expand early childhood education	Supports	Opposes expansion, supports better coordination	Supports
Increase student aid for college (Pell Grants)	Supports	Opposes	Supports
Increase federal education funding	Supports	Opposes	Supports

upfront

Who's on your side?

The next President of the United States has an awful lot to worry about—the economy, the war in Iraq, 45 million Americans without health insurance...and you. That's right—you and your students and the big mess that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has become.

WITH THE NUMBER of schools forced into "restructuring" up more than 50 percent this year, and the U.S. Department of Education offering little assistance to their students, the law desperately needs improvement. "We think the federal law is like a first draft of a paper—and we don't think it's developed very well," says Jack Jennings, president of the independent Center for Education Policy.

So what would the two candidates do in their own edits? Sen. John McCain, who calls NCLB "a great beginning," has taken the troubling stance that NCLB-mandated state tests should be used to determine teacher pay. It's a damaging pay-for-performance scenario based on a deeply flawed and inadequately funded law.

For broader assistance, look to NEA's recommended candidate, Sen. Barack Obama. He gets it: "No Child Left Behind has done more to stigmatize and demoralize our students and teachers in struggling schools than it has to marshal the talent and the determination and the resources to turn them around," he says.

"I don't want our standards measured just by a single high-stakes standardized test, because I don't want our teachers teaching to the tests. I want our students learning art, and music, and science, and literature, and social studies."

Houses for educators **14**

Buy right **16**

Games for your brain **18**

PHOTO: CALVIN KNIGHT

With a white picket fence, please...

It may seem like the house of your dreams is just that. In your dreams.

NOT SO! Even as rampant foreclosures lead the nightly news, your Association leaders are working on innovative measures to create affordable housing opportunities for educators, especially in the kinds of places where teachers are competing for reasonably priced real estate with tech gurus and cashed-out CEOs.

In New York City, where one-room apartments rent for $2,000 a month, the United Federation of Teachers has led plans for a 234-unit housing project in the South Bronx, where educators specifically will pay bottom-dollar rents. Backed with $28 million from the New York City Teachers' Retirement System, the project is likely to become a model for districts everywhere.

But they're not the first. In North Carolina, the beachfront Dare County district broke ground last spring on its own low-rent apartment building. And, this past summer, in California's Silicon Valley, the Santa Clara Unified School District got started on a second apartment building for educators. Its first was wildly popular—and teachers who won a slot in it were far less likely to leave the district.

HAMBURGLARS, WATCH OUT!

REMEMBER WHEN Napoleon Dynamite stashed a bag of tater-tots in his pocket for afternoon snacking? Weird...but at least our cinematic friend paid for them. Last year, in Fairfax County, Virginia, school cafeterias lost a whopping $1.2 million in prepared food to student theft. With that in mind, the district has installed a $60,000 video surveillance system to monitor lines at a half-dozen secondary schools, sending a clear message to would-be thieves: Leggo!

93

The percentage of **CHILDREN** who say they go **TRICK-OR-TREATING**.

SOURCE: THE NATIONAL CONFECTIONERS ASSOCIATION.

HOUSE AND COUPLE PHOTO: JACK STAR/PHOTOLINK; CLOUDS: DON FARRALL; FRENCH FRIES: JOAO VIRISSIMO; KIDS: JANI BRYSON

From the SCHOOL HOUSE to the STATE HOUSE

We know you look at some of those folks in government and think, "Please, I could do better than that!" Well, go ahead! Public educators in public office can make a great difference for colleagues, communities, and students.

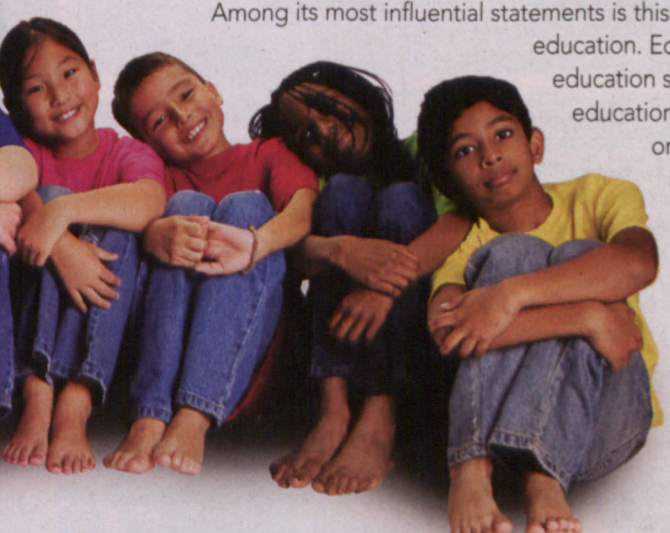
In West Virginia, Assistant Principal Josh Stowers, a former NEA state director and high school teacher, plans on doing just that. This month, Stowers' name will appear unopposed on ballots, which means he'll be in the State House of Delegates in January. At the top of his to-do list? "West Virginia is 49th in salary across the country!" he says. "We need to do a better job of attracting and retaining teachers."

In every level of government, there are plenty of well-intentioned (or not so) folks who think they know how to fix public education. But it's people like Stowers and other elected educators who actually have the experience to offer common-sense solutions. "When somebody comes in and says, 'Here's what I live every day, here's what I see every day, and here's what needs to be done,' I'm hoping that person will be listened to," Stowers says.

Human Rights for All?

On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a stirring manifesto of the common rights of all people in all nations to freedom, justice, and peace. Arising from the world's experience in World War II, and developed by a multi-national commission, it represents the first global declaration of human rights.

Among its most influential statements is this: "Everyone has the right to an education. Education shall be free…elementary education shall be compulsory…and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit." But with 72 million children still out of school worldwide, according to a 2008 UNESCO Education for All monitoring report, the declaration has yet to be fulfilled.



For more information, see page 53. And, to get a full copy of the declaration, go to www.un.org/rights.

SCHOOL AND STATE HOUSE ILLUSTRATIONS: CARRIE ENGLISH-MONTOYA

+ notepad

FIXING STUDENT AID

Too many students can't afford to go to college, despite the $86 billion spent on federal grants, loans, work aid, and other tax benefits for college students, says the Rethinking Student Aid Study Group, a special task force from The College Board.

In a recent report, the task force set out key recommendations: Abandoning the government's complex aid application and using tax information to determine eligibility for Pell Grants; increasing the size of Pell Grants, based on the annual consumer index; combining the many education tax credits and deductions into a single credit and allowing students to apply it to non-tuition expenses; tying federal loans to inflation; and replacing the regular 10-year mortgage-style repayment plan with a graduated repayment plan.

Many of these actions would be welcomed by the indebted. But NEA would ask for even greater measures to make college affordable. To get involved in our college affordability campaign, go to www.nea.org/collegeaffordability.

Have a great idea?

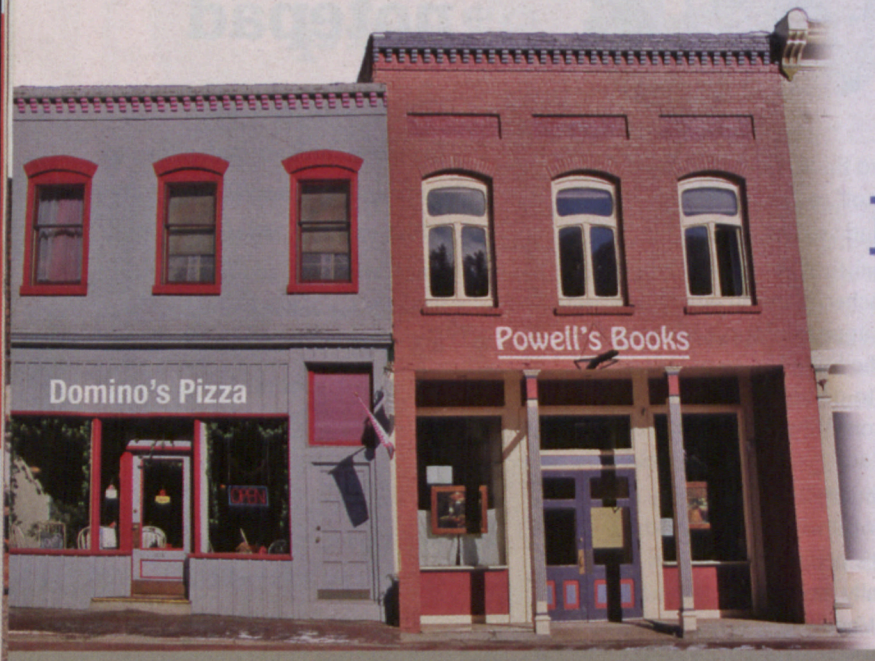
Send it by mail: *NEA Today*
1201 16th St., N.W.,
Washington, DC 20036

Send it by e-mail:
neatoday@nea.org

33

The percentage of high school **SENIORS** who attend **RELIGIOUS SERVICES** weekly.

SOURCE: TRENDS IN THE WELL-BEING OF AMERICAN YOUTH, 2005.



Informed shopper

WHEN YOU PERUSE the aisles of your local grocery store, you're looking to make the best buys for your family. Why not take the same critical approach to businesses in general? With the right information in hand, you may choose not to spend your hard-earned money on businesses that actively campaign against unions or public education.

DOMINO'S CEO DAVID BRANDON has publicly supported the privatization of public school jobs and merit pay plans for teachers. Plus, his company, Domino's Pizza, has opposed the unionization of its workers. After the National Labor Relations Board recognized the first pizza-delivery union in 2006, Domino's expressed its official disappointment in a sorrowful press release, and then rewarded its non-union, non-troublemaking employees with a salary raise.

WHILE THE GOOD WORKS DONE BY WAL-MART'S foundation are admirable, the company has not extended the same compassion to its own workers. In 2006, the company faced 57 wage and hour lawsuits and its health insurance covered just 43 percent of its 1.4 million U.S. employees. And we haven't even begun to talk about the anti-public education positions taken by its head honchos, which include big donations to pro-voucher efforts.

ANOTHER BIG BUSINESS THAT HAS MADE ITS MARK in philanthropy is Target. The company says it contributes $2 million a week to the communities where its stores are located, and it has been a leader in supporting literacy efforts, including NEA's Read Across America. They're not perfect—its stores are non-union and the company has maintained that unions would not be good for employees or customers.

ANOTHER GOOD ALTERNATIVE IS COSTCO—an out-sized store, but one with a bigger conscience, too. In 2005, labor researchers reported that the typical Costco worker earned $42,000 a year after three years and the company also footed 92 percent of the costs of health insurance. At that time, 18 percent of its workers were unionized—not great, but their contract was used as everybody's employee handbook.

WE LOVE THOSE TEACHER DISCOUNT DAYS as much as anyone, but we don't like the official hostility Border's has shown its employees. Yes, they do have the right to organize! And we would prefer to buy our books without crossing picket lines. (And really, did Border's have to hire a law firm that actually wrote the book on union-busting—in four editions, thank you very much!)

SUBWAY, THE POPULAR SANDWICH SHOP, is a healthier choice—all around. We appreciate its work on behalf of the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship and Big Brothers/Big Sisters, as well as its efforts to teach young people about healthy eating.

CHECK OUT OREGON-BASED POWELL'S BOOKS at www.powells.com. Their selection is just as good as the other big Internet sellers (which are not unionized), but their workers also enjoy the right to organize. Plus, Powell's helps to financially support LabourStart (www.labourstart.org), a news service for unions that collects information and assists in organizing campaigns.

STOREFRONTS PHOTO: ERIC BEAN WITH ALTERATIONS BY GROFF CREATIVE, INC; PIZZA: GROFF CREATIVE, INC., STACK OF BOOKS: PURESTOCK.

BECAUSE YOU'RE WORTH IT!

IN THE OLD LINE STATE, they've successfully raised the bar. This year, every teacher in Maryland will earn at least $40,000—even after just eight of the 24 districts met the mark in 2006. The difference? Intensive training of local negotiators by the Maryland State Teachers Association and an aggressive coordinated statewide effort. Maryland is the second state to meet NEA's goal of a minimum $40K salary—Hawaii's teachers, who work in a single statewide bargaining unit, broke the barrier in 2007. Coming up behind them is New Jersey, where more than 92 percent of locals have met the goal.

Staring Down the Bullies

RODEO CLOWN Starvin' Marvin Nash is getting serious these days—with a new mentoring program that rounds up bullies. Called "Bullying Hurts," (just as much as a two-ton steer...) the six-week educational program trains youth mentors as nonviolent role models, using a rodeo theme.

After talking to teachers about the long-term effects of bullying, Nash launched Bullying Hurts five years ago and has introduced it to more than 300 schools in 35 states to date. Nash, a former rodeo cowboy from Texas, says its success lies in the fact that the mentoring system perpetuates itself. Once the high school students learn how to mentor the younger children, they in turn teach the program—and the succession continues.

"The elementary kids look up to the high school students because they are older, and the high school students mentor because they like the responsibility," he says. "I tell them that if a rodeo clown can do it, anyone can do it."

—JAZZY WRIGHT

MARYLAND STATE SIGN: VISIONSOFAMERICA/JOE SOHM; ROPE: YASUHIDE FUMOTO; MARVIN NASH: COPYRIGHT 2007-2008 BULLYING HURTS

> capitol report

HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

With more than 45 million Americans without health insurance and American consumers paying some of the highest health care costs in the world, NEA is asking legislators, NEA members, and others what kind of solution they support—a guarantee to quality, affordable care for all? Or a go-out-and-get-your-own approach?

This fall NEA and Health Care for America NOW! sent letters to every member of Congress asking, "Which Side Are You On?" For more information, or to join their campaign, go to http://healthcareforamericanow.org

NEA's lobbyists also are working to ensure children's access to the State Children's Health Insurance Program. In 2006, SCHIP covered 6.6 million children, but President Bush vetoed an expansion in 2007. Meanwhile, the number of uninsured children has grown close to 9 million.

Want to share a story?

By mail: *NEA Today*
1201 16th St., N.W.,
Washington, DC 20036

By e-mail: neatoday@nea.org

Your move.

AS YOU SHEAF your pile of pink and yellow money, cursing that darn luxury tax and hoping that you've got enough green to pay the rent on St. James Place, consider that this ride along the Reading Railway isn't just for fun. It seems that there are more benefits to Monopoly and other board games than a few hours of giggles.

According to a study published this year in the journal *Child Development,* games can be very effective tools in learning—particularly for poor or minority children. The researchers designed a Chutes and Ladders-like game for a group of poor Head Start preschoolers and found that they learned and retained math knowledge much more effectively than their non-gaming peers. (This may be old news for some parents who schedule game nights with pizza on Fridays.)

New research also suggests that some games—like Simon Says or Red Light, Green Light—may also help children with impulse control or "executive function," according to a study published last year in *Science.* Whatever you call it, it's an important skill for real-life success.

So, let the games begin.

VITAL STATS

Squeakers!

In 2004, Alama Uluave squeaked by Michael Clara for Salt Lake City school board by just 1 VOTE.

In 1984, Frank McCloskey edged Rick McIntyre for U.S. Representative from Indiana's 8th district by 4 VOTES.

In 2004, Christine Gregoire nosed Dino Rossi for governor of Washington by just 129 VOTES.

And of course: In 2000, George Bush bested Al Gore for President by a state-certified (and hotly disputed) 537 VOTES.

Which means—your vote counts!

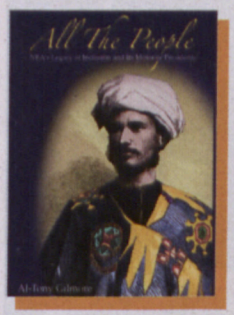
"And though the hurricane washed away the school system, it [its students'] other problems....Were public schools really attack all of those problems?"

SOURCE: "A TEACHABLE MOMENT" (AUGUST 17, 2008), A *NEW YORK TIMES* ARTICLE ON THE REBUILDING OF NEW ORLEANS

GAME OF CHECKERS: CORBIS; VOTERS: CORBIS

Book Focus

ALL THE PEOPLE



People often say NEA is the "most progressive institution of its kind in the world." The proof is in *All the People, NEA's Legacy of Inclusion and Its Minority Presidents* (NEA Professional Library), a new book from NEA's own Al-Tony Gilmore, a historian and scholar who, while assembling this fascinating examination of NEA's history, discovered its very soul. "If you don't think this organization is special, think about a Black man being at the founding of this organization...the same year that 4 million African Americans are held in bondage," says Gilmore. (That man, by the way, was Robert Campbell, a free "quadroon" who earned $400 a year at a Philadelphia Quaker school.) Through Gilmore's detailed investigative work, you'll meet every one of NEA's minority presidents, starting with Braulio Alonso, a Spanish-American who was the first at everything he did, continuing through Mary Hatwood Futrell, the daughter of a domestic worker, and most recently Reg Weaver. Read it, and you can't help but be proud to be a part of this institution.

didn't wash away the right vehicle to

SCHOOLS POST-HURRICANE KATRINA.

Q&A

Bow Wow

PLATINUM-SELLING HIP-HOP ARTIST

The 21-year-old rapper used to think politics was for "old folks," but he recently kicked off a nationwide nonpartisan campaign, "Walk Across America," to register young voters. "Do you want your grandparents deciding your future?" he asks. Use your power to change things for the better, he urges.

Tell us a little about your campaign to register voters.
Four years ago, we had the chance to do it, but we didn't register the number of voters we needed. [Forty percent of eligible under-30s voted, compared with 70 percent of 65-plus voters.] This is a second chance and we need to take it. You don't often get second chances in life. We need the youth to be more involved. And there's nobody who can talk to the youth like I can, and I want to take advantage of that opportunity.

What are the political issues that motivated you to get involved?
For me, it's the economy. That's the main thing for everybody—rich, poor, middle-class. Everybody's hurting. Even myself, I just sold my tour bus.... We've got schools closing because of the gas shortage, because of Hurricane Ike, and it's really sorry that kids can't get on the bus and get a day's worth of education.

Education was also a very strong value in my household. My mother always preached the importance of education because that's something nobody can take away from you. They can take your jewelry and cars, but they can't take away your knowledge.

A little off-topic, but do you think hip-hop can be used as a learning tool in the classroom?
Sometimes, yes. There might a certain rapper out there that a student listens to, and it helps them. It motivates them. Not all rap is bad. You got a lot of very good artists...Tupac is very intelligent—he was into politics and he wrote real-life songs about real-life situations. When you listen to it, it captivates your soul. It's like poetry.

For more information about the use of hip-hop in the classroom, go to page 35. *And, for more information about Bow Wow's voter registration efforts, go to* ***www.bowwow87.com****.*

leading the way

FOLLOW HER LEAD!

Directions for a better future for public education.

When Lily Eskelsen flew to the Democratic National Convention in Denver in August, the first person she met, while sliding into an airport taxi, was a cab driver from Ethiopia. She talked to him, of course, because she pretty much talks to everyone. Introducing herself, she said, "I'm a public school teacher!"

The two of them chatted about the convention. And they talked about the importance of this national election, and Lily Eskelsen, public school teacher, explained to this cabbie why she so fervently supports Barack Obama, the pro-public school candidate. And then she stopped herself to say, "Oh, but I'm so embarrassed! I don't know anything about politics in Ethiopia!"

"It doesn't matter," the cabbie told her. "The President of Ethiopia cannot harm your children. But the President of the United States? He can help—or harm—children all over the world."

Then Lily Eskelsen, who happens also to be Vice-President of the NEA, slid out of that airport cab with another vote for Barack Obama in her handbag.

And here's what she wants you to know: You can do that, too. You can help elect a President who will help—or harm—your children, your children's children, and children all over the world. One out of 100 Americans is an NEA member. "If each of us talked to 10 or 20 people about public education—if each of us talked to just one other person! Just imagine what we all could accomplish," says Eskelsen.

And then, after the elections, you can keep on talking so politicians at every level of government hear your voice when they're writing laws and spending money.

"The best person to talk about what schools need and what people in schools need is not somebody with a title at the NEA," Eskelsen says. "There is nothing more powerful in the world than a third-grade teacher who calls a congressional office or a school custodian who calls his state representative and says, 'This is happening in my building.'"

Even simpler, start with the people you know. "Talk to somebody at church, next to you in the line at the grocery store, and tell them what you love about what you do. Tell them about the school band or the importance of the theater program. We can't sit silent when politicians jeopardize these great things!" Eskelsen urges.

Your voice is the most authentic—because, unlike many politicians, you actually know what you're talking about. "We're constantly dealing with people who don't know anything, but they're telling us how to do our jobs!" Eskelsen says. "I want our political leaders to respect our voice."

In January, when Congress reconvenes, they'll begin the hard work of rewriting the No Child Left Behind law. "The least we can ask of our politicians is that they do no harm," Eskelsen says plainly. "If we look at NCLB, it really has done harm."

At the same time, state and national legislators also will be talking about new ways to pay teachers. NEA opposes pay-for-test-scores, but it does want to be part of the conversation on authentic measures of teacher performance.

"We want 1 million, 2 million, 3 million people to email or write those newly elected politicians, even if they're not the ones we supported, to say, 'Here's my voice, my passion, my love. Don't be stupid. Don't hurt the kids. We're counting on you.'"

PHOTO: SCOTT ISKOWITZ

RETIREMENT

Pension Battles

In New Jersey, a bill aimed at reforming the pension system for future public and education workers was passed by the Assembly in June and (at press time) is awaiting the governor's signature. The measure requires part-time workers to earn $7,500 per year to qualify for a pension credit but does not mandate those employees work a certain number of hours to be eligible. The $7,500 threshold is up from the $1,500 now required for local, county, and state workers, and $500 required for education workers, last changed in 1955.

Joyce Powell, president of the **New Jersey Education Association**, conceded the $500 threshold should have been adjusted in prior years, but argued that going from $500 to $7,500 is too dramatic a change and makes too many low-wage workers ineligible for pensions."It should have been phased in," she said.

Meanwhile, **NEA-Alaska** members joined about 90,000 Alaskans who comprise the Alaskan Public Pension Coalition, a partnership of public employee unions and retirement organizations. The coalition was founded in 2005 after the Alaska Legislature dismantled the public employee retirement system. For more, go to www.securealaskasfuture.org.

SALARY

The Leverage of a Wage Campaign

After staging a three-month-long living wage campaign, a tentative agreement has been reached in Pennsylvania between members of the **Colonial Intermediate Unit 20 Education Association** and the state agency of the same name that employs them. Most wage campaigns take up to three years to organize and execute. The Association is made up of 330 associate teachers (paraprofessionals), secretaries, warehouse clerks, and certified part-time assistants employed at 95 worksites. ESP salaries, formerly starting at $13,740, were raised to a starting salary of $18–19,000 by the end of the five-year contract. The new contract also includes a salary schedule, 12 Association days, and the right to transfer unused days to the next year.

In other salary news, the **Texas State Teachers Association** reported that poor pay and working conditions were the two main reasons why educators leave the profession, according to a survey of Texas teachers. "Texas Teachers, Moonlighting, and Morale" revealed that the average salary of teachers surveyed was $47,545. An extra job brought in another $8,288. For more, visit www.tsta.org/news/current/SummerAdvocateWEB.pdf.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Progress on Campus

New Mexico Highlands University faculty won the first collective bargaining agreement in the state's history. "We are thrilled to be the first four-year plus institution of higher education in the state to reach such an agreement," says **New Mexico Highlands University Faculty Association** President Tom Ward. Under the agreement, salary increases are retroactive to August 2007 and a 3 percent increase was applied to the 2006–07 base salary. Minimum salaries for 2007–08 were raised to $45,000 for Assistant Professors, $51,000 for Associate Professors, and $58,000 for full Professors.

Meanwhile, the **Wisconsin Education Association Council** is supporting legislation requiring the salary and benefits of part-time technical college instructors to be prorated based on full-time instructors' pay and benefits. Approximately 60 percent of instructors with the Wisconsin Technical College System teach part-time and receive disproportionately lower pay and health care coverage even though they meet the same certification standards as full-time teachers. It is estimated that part-time instructors are paid 40 percent less than a full-time instructor for teaching the same class.

Report Card

We check out who's making the grade—or needs improvement—in education around the country.

A **Randy Pausch**

A computer science professor and author of the inspiring *The Last Lecture*, Pausch lost his battle with pancreatic cancer on July 25. The book is now in 30 languages and popular on high school and college campuses.

F **Texas Gov. Rick Perry**

When the board of the Harrold Independent School District voted to allow teachers and other staff to carry concealed weapons to school and special events, Perry held a press conference endorsing the new policy.

A **American Teen**

From award-winning director Nanette Burstein, this charming and humorous documentary provides an inside look into the lives of four teenagers in a small town in Indiana through their senior year of high school.

PHOTOS PAUSCH: ABC NEWS; PERRY: WWW.RICKPERRY.ORG; WWW.IMDB.COM

WHERE HAVE ALL THE NURSES GONE?

Lack of health care professionals in schools affects students', teachers' performance. BY JOHN ROSALES

Nurses are so much in demand in today's job market that school nurse Marianne Capoziello cannot open her mailbox without finding recruitment letters from hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, and health care employment agencies.

"I get recruitment offers all the time," says Capoziello, a licensed practical nurse (LPN) for 30 years and member of the Polk County Education Association in Florida. "But I love school nursing."

Hospitals are the most aggressive recruiters, offering to cover moving expenses along with cash signing bonuses and financial assistance with student loans. In 2007, hospitals had a vacancy rate of just over 8 percent, according to the National Association of School Nurses (NASN).

"The nursing shortage is expected to intensify as baby boomers age and the need for health care grows," says Amy Garcia, NASN executive director. "The problem [for schools] appears to be a shortage of adequately funded positions for school nurses."

The average public school nurse cares for 1,151 students at 2.2 schools. About 25 percent of schools have no school nurse, partly because of funding. The average salary for a school nurse is $42,467, or between $33,929 and $53,622, according to a Certified Compensation Professionals' analysis done for Salary.com.

To measure the need for school nurses, districts try to maintain an appropriate ratio of school nurses to students. Ratios vary from state to state. Students in Vermont, for example, have one nurse per 275 students. In Utah it's one nurse per 4,893 students.

States like Alabama (one nurse per 936 students), Georgia (one per 1,734), and Tennessee (one per 1,415) have committed funds during the last 10 years to significantly improve the ratio of school nurses to students. But with their health on the line, it's vital that students have regular contact with a nurse.

> "People think we sit behind a desk and that's it. It's not like that at all. They quit on me when they find out that this is not all fun. You have to want to be a school nurse." —Irene Rosales

Garcia says the increasing health needs of children suffering from asthma, obesity, diabetes, and substance abuse is escalating.

"School nurses struggle to make sure that all students can see, hear, and feel well enough to learn," she says.

K–12 schools aren't the only institutions suffering from a lack of nurses—universities are grappling with a shortage of instructors in their nursing programs.

"Most nursing schools have long waiting lists," Garcia says. "Students with excellent grades are routinely turned away for lack of [nursing school] teaching positions."

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, more than 30,000 qualified nursing school applicants were turned down last year primarily because of a faculty shortage. California currently has wait lists for nursing programs of over three years.

Insufficient clinical sites, classroom space, and budget constraints also hamper nursing programs. By the year 2020, the Health Resources and Services Administration projects that more than 1 million new registered nurses (RNs) will be needed to meet demands for nursing care at schools and hospitals.

To address the nursing shortage, national organizations such as NASN and the National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses (NFLPN) work on state and federal government committees to supply research and written and oral testimony to legislatures and Congress. These efforts helped produce the Nurse Reinvestment Act, signed by President Bush in 2002. This initiative is intended to encourage people to enter and remain in nursing careers. The law establishes scholarships, loan repayments, public service announcements, retention grants, career ladders, and grants for nursing faculty.

Statewide initiatives are also under way. In Pennsylvania, for example, six new nursing education initiatives were announced to address faculty shortages by encouraging practicing nurses to return to school, earn graduate degrees, and teach nursing. Illinois is unveiling a

nea.org FOR A LIST OF NURSE CATEGORIES AND BACKGROUND, GO TO WWW.NEA.ORG/REF?NURSES.

plan to provide faculty scholarships and grants to nursing schools in order to expand student enrollment.

"We need to develop more nurse educators," says Ottamissiah Moore, an executive board member with NFLPN. "LPNs are helping with the shortage of RNs by returning to school for additional training."

California is trying to expand nursing education through a $90 million initiative.

To bolster interest in a nursing career, two national media campaigns have been launched by Nurses for a Healthier Tomorrow, a coalition of 44 health care organizations. The campaigns are aimed at raising interest in nursing careers among middle and high school students.

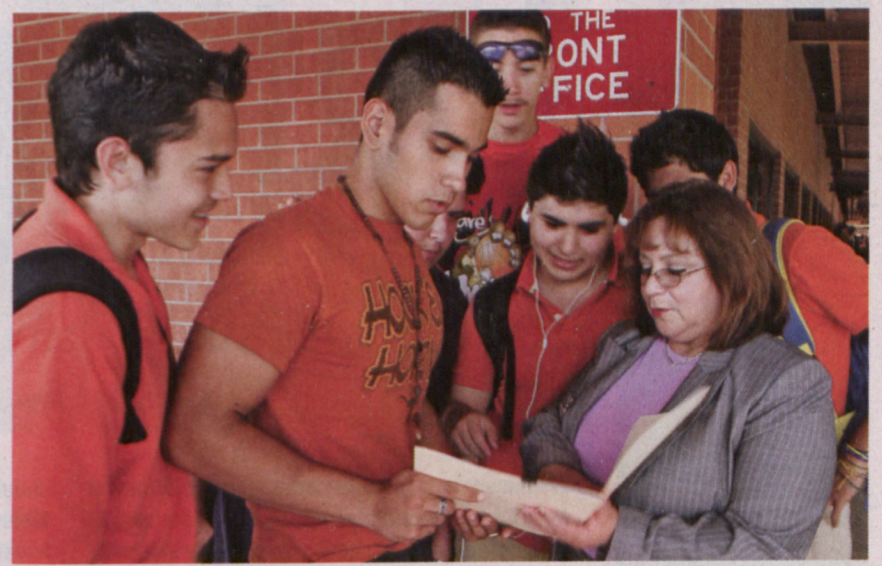
But for now, schools are still left to deal with their own lack of nursing staff, even as the need for school nurses continues to grow.

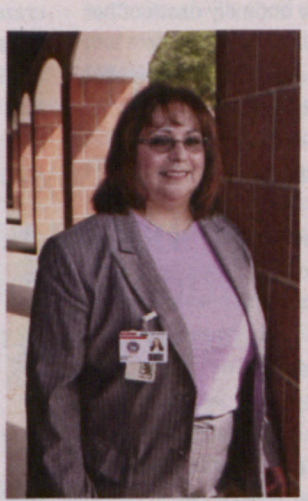
At the United Independent School District (UISD) in Laredo, Texas, the nurse-student ratio is one to 800. The district's 40,000 students and 6,000 employees are served by 45 RNs (with five vacancies), eight licensed vocational nurses (LVN), and 17 health assistants (with six vacancies).

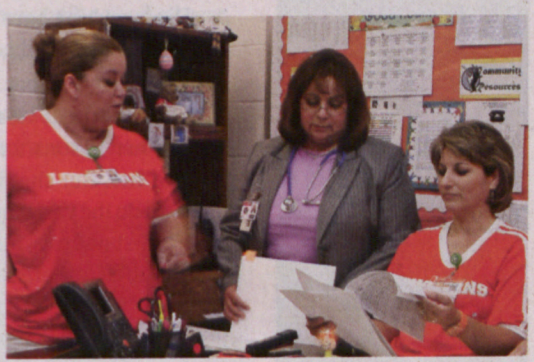
"I wish it would change to 500 students per nurse," says Irene Rosales, health services director. "Some areas have one RN for two or three schools."

The district's largest campus, United High School, has 3,300 students who are served by two RNs, one LVN, and one health technician.

In addition to assessing student health status and making referrals, identifying vision and hearing problems, administering medication and vaccines, and delivering emergency care, nurses also manage insulin pumps, check blood sugars, insert tubes, suction children on ventilators, and counsel pregnant teens.







Health Services Director **Irene Rosales** visits a nurse station at a district high school where she interacts with students and nursing staff. Despite a growing need for nurses, nursing programs can't meet the demand due to a shortage of nursing instructors, classrooms, and clinical sites.

At UISD, school nurses also teach first aid classes to teachers, conduct drug assessment exams on students believed to be under the influence of drugs, weigh and measure the body mass index of every student from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade, and conduct health-related classes for students and parents.

"People think we sit behind a desk and that's it," says Rosales, an RN who worked at schools for 16 years before becoming a director in 2006. "It's not like that at all."

This false impression about school nursing has partly contributed to the shortage.

"They quit on me when they find out that this is not all fun," she says. "You have to want to be a school nurse." nea

Send comments to jrosales@nea.org

PHOTOS: T.R. ESQUIVEL JR.

READ AND RESPOND

How do you use textbooks? (If you don't, how do you manage without them?)

DID YOU KNOW?

Federal law requires that textbooks be available in electronic form so technology can make them accessible to students with visual impairments. Read more at www.nea.org/ref?textbooks.

Textbooks:

Love them! Hate them! Can't do without them?

BY ALAIN JEHLEN

WHEN JANA DEAN set out to teach her Tumwater, Washington, eighth graders about statistics and life expectancy, she didn't open the textbook. She told the class about the untimely death of her father.

"There was a moment of silence," she recalls. "Then they started telling their own stories: A stillborn sister. A 7-year-old brother hit by a car. Someone who died in a war."

Her classes found out how old 400 of their relatives were when they died, and then calculated life expectancy.

Dean couldn't have found that lesson in a textbook—it was unique to her and her students. Like many great teachers, she designs her lessons for the children in front of her. But she does use textbooks sometimes, as do the vast majority of teachers.

With state tests the dominant fact of life in many schools, the pressure is on to cover the material—all of it, whether you cover it well or not—and textbooks can help. In fact, that's one of the things many teachers hate about them: They tend to be the proverbial "mile wide and an inch deep."

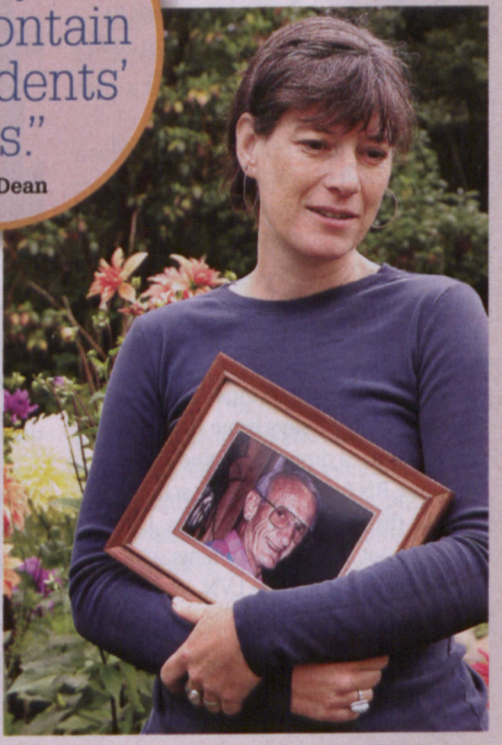
Never mind that the foreign countries school critics hold up as examples actually use the opposite strategy—thinner books, fewer topics, more depth. Here in America, with long lists of standards enforced by high-stakes tests, the books seem to be getting fatter and heavier, to the point where the publisher's trade organization says schools should train students not to carry book bags on just one shoulder: you need two padded shoulder straps and a waist strap to haul all those facts around.

Educators are fighting back against the testing craze. (Don't forget to vote for leaders who will let us replace test-and-punish with teach-and-learn!)

But for now, for most teachers, the realistic task is not so much to do without the text as to keep it under control—make it your servant, not your master.

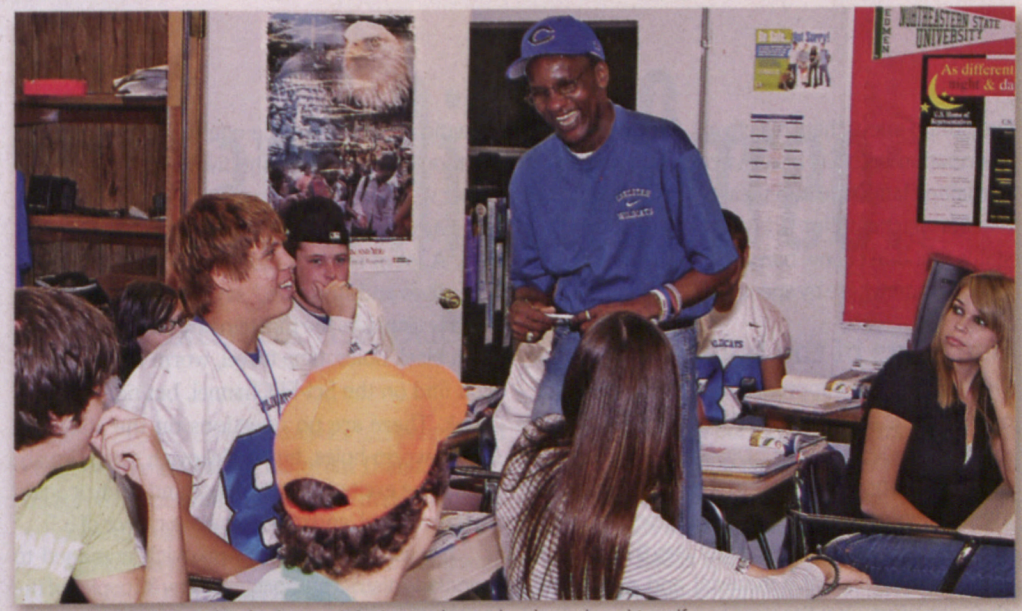
Here are some ways teachers try to do that.

> "Textbooks just don't contain my students' lives."
> —Jana Dean



Jana Dean began a lesson on statistics by telling her students about the early death of her father.

BOY PHOTO: PURESTOCK; QUESTION MARK: ANDRZEJ80; JANA DEAN: KATHY KRAUSS



Lawrence Lane has textbooks that work for his students—he chose them himself.

Choose the book.

"I love my textbooks," says Lin Prescott, a middle school science teacher in Auburn, Maine. "I helped pick them out."

Her book is only half an inch thick, bucking the trend. But more important to her, there are lots of online add-ons both for her and her students. In Maine, she says, every student in seventh and eighth grade is issued a laptop, and this book lets students make good use of it. "There are interactive quizzes and practice tests that give them instant feedback and tell them where to go in the text for extra information."

She also likes the PowerPoints available for teachers, and the many different questions and assignments that she can easily customize.

In Checotah, Oklahoma, social studies teacher Lawrence Lane also chose his texts but with very different criteria: "I went with the book that would be easiest for my kids to read. Some of them don't quite read at grade level. So for me, print size, vocabulary, and simple explanations were important, along with good charts and pictures—things that make it easier for the kid to open the book and follow along."

What do they have in common? Both were active in choosing books that fit their needs, Prescott sifting through many options with her colleagues and Lane working more on his own because he was the only one teaching his particular course.

Depending on your district, you may not have that opportunity, but if you do, these colleagues say, grab it. The time you invest will pay off all year. And many districts pay teachers for the time they spend choosing texts.

If your district administrators want to dictate the book you're going to use, you may be able to do

MIXED FEELINGS

What NEA members say about textbooks

LOVE THEM	HATE THEM
They give me the scope and sequence I need to teach to.	They're heavy.
They save me time.	They're boring and shallow.
They're starting to take advantage of new technology.	They're expensive and I don't have enough.
They're especially good for new teachers.	They're not written for the students I teach.

(FROM RESPONSES TO A SURVEY OF DELEGATES TO THE NEA 2008 REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY.)

WRITE AND DISCUSS

Write down what you like best and what you like least about your textbooks. Ask your students to do the same. (Answers will vary.) Discuss.

Summarize and send the results to whoever chose the book. Send them also to the publisher. Post them on the NEA members' discussion board: www.nea.org/ref?textbooks

PHOTO ABOVE: RUTH KELLY STUDIO; FOUNTAIN PEN: STOCKBYTE

something about that collectively. See page 29 for information on NEA local Associations that have bargained language into their contracts requiring teacher participation in textbook selection. In states that don't allow bargaining, maybe you can still get somewhere by speaking up as a group.

Use parts of the book.

That's Jana Dean's approach. "I use [textbooks] for homework assignments, and I select lessons that meet my students' needs." Dean may take a problem from the book and rewrite it to fit her students' lives—a yogurt shop in the text becomes a popular local eatery in her class. And she uses the books to help her sequence the material and make sure she's covering what the state requires.

"I tried teaching without them," she says. "In my first two schools, we didn't have textbooks. But it was such a pain to make up all of my own problems! When used as a resource, they can be a great time-saver."

But she doesn't let them run the show. "Textbooks," she says, "just don't contain my students' lives."

Look for better materials.

Again, you may not be able to use this strategy, but it worked for Chad Pavlekovich, a seventh-grade science teacher in Salisbury, Maryland.

He fell in love with a series of short books by Joy Hakim, who approaches science through the human stories of science pioneers like Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein.

In an article on Hakim's books, the *Washington Post* ran excerpts from her story of Einstein's equation $E=mc^2$ and the equivalent passage in a textbook. One was bright, lively, interesting. The other was flat, dull, boring.

Guess which one was Hakim's?

"A lot of my kids didn't realize that scientists have lives and struggles," says Pavlekovich.

He also likes the Einstein book because it deals with black holes, time travel, worm holes—things you find on the Sci-Fi Channel, but not in a textbook. There are no questions on the state test about worm holes, but Pavlekovich says, "I want kids to be excited about science and study it again in high school, and maybe make a career of it."

It wasn't easy, but Pavlekovich managed to persuade district authorities to buy 30 copies of the books. "The kids love them," he reports.

Teach against the book?

You're stuck with a book you really object to. That happened to Portland, Oregon, social studies teacher Bill Bigelow. "My book had exactly three paragraphs on climate change. And the second paragraph says, 'Not all scientists agree with the theory of the Greenhouse Effect.'"

So Bigelow concocted his own global warming unit. His students first read about what's happening and how it affects different kinds of people. Then they interacted with each other, playing the roles of someone who loses, someone who gains, or someone who's trying to make a difference.

Afterward, he had them read the textbook and critique it. "All curriculum is about teaching kids how to read," says Bigelow. "I wanted to inspire questioning and defiance."

Send comments to ajehlen@nea.org

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Do any of the strategies described in this article help you? Share your ideas and experiences on the members' discussion board you can link to from www.nea.org/ref?textbooks.

IS THIS AN OPEN BOOK?

In 2002, NEA and the Association of American Publishers surveyed a random sample of NEA teachers about their use of textbooks. These are some of the questions (some have been simplified):

1. **Do you use textbooks in your classes?**
2. **Do you use them every day?**
3. **Do you have enough copies for every student?**
4. **Are you responsible for choosing your textbooks?**
5. **Is it very important for teachers to choose the books for their classes?**

For each question, write down your answer and what percentage you think said yes. The survey responses are below, upside down.

Give yourself a point if you got within 5 percent. **1)** 78% yes; **2)** 47% yes; **3)** 83% yes; **4)** 28% yes; **5)** 88% yes

TOOLBELT PHOTO: SIEDE PREIS

Left and Right Agree:

State textbook adoption must go!

LIBERAL SOCIOLOGIST JAMES LOEWEN and conservative education historian Diane Ravitch disagree about many things, but they both hate school textbooks, and for similar reasons.

Ravitch lays out her case in *The Language Police*. Loewen's book is *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. (Despite the title, his target is books.)

Both say textbooks are boring, bland, and "undermine learning rather than...encouraging it," in Ravitch's words. The industry's guiding principle, they say, is, "Offend no one."

They even agree on the cause. "Marketing textbooks is like marketing fishing lures: the point is to catch fishermen, not fish," explains Loewen. The goal of publishers is to attract, not students, but the state textbook adoption committees that control purchasing.

> "These people are not ogres."
>
> —textbook critic Raleigh McLemore

There are 21 "adoption" states, where state funds can only be used to buy books on an approved list. In other states, publishers sell freely to thousands of individual districts. But the adoption states, especially California and Texas, set the pattern for the whole country.

Adoption committee members get so many books, they can't read them all. So they often use bloodless statistical tests and checklists to see which books fit state standards. Fascinating, dramatic, unforgettable—these qualities make the difference between books that teach and books that bomb, but they aren't as important in the adoption process as satisfying the checklists.

Banned books, distorted facts

Centralized adoption also makes it easier for groups to push for changes in books to make them conform with their own ideas—even if those changes take all the spirit out of the writing, introduce errors, or eliminate material children should know.

Ravitch aims most of her fire at the lists of banned words and other detailed rules that make books "politically correct." These rules may originally have helped to correct stereotypes, she says, but they've gone far beyond that.

Loewen writes more about historical inaccuracies. The books ignore or whitewash unpleasant facts about our country in the name of promoting some people's ideas of patriotism.

Both say that when every edgy sentence is cut from a narrative, the result is awfully dull.

Loewen says publishers try to make up for boring narrative with splashy graphics to catch the eye of committee members who are too busy to read the prose.

Responding to this bizarre market, publishers have developed an industrial approach to building textbooks in which teams of largely anonymous workers write text, find photos, and design pages to a formula that produces adoptable, but sometimes indigestible, tomes.

The scholars listed as authors, Loewen says, just lend their prestigious names. The actual writing is mostly done by "minions in the bowels of the publishing houses."

Loewen found two history books, supposedly written by different distinguished scholars, with page after page of nearly identical passages. When he asked them about it, it appeared that none of the

ADOPTION

ADVANCED LEARNERS

Just because Diane Ravitch and James Loewen hate the same books, that doesn't mean they would love the same books. Read Ravitch's *The Language Police* and Loewen's *Lies My Teacher Told Me* and then compare and contrast what they want in a history text.

CRITICAL THINKING

Pearson executive Paul McFall describes the textbook-writing process very differently from the way it is portrayed by Loewen and Ravitch, but there is some common ground. What is it?

LIGHTBULB PHOTO: STOCKBYTE; RODIN SCULPTURE: SEAN NEL; BACKPACK: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.

"authors" had even read those passages.

Paul McFall, a senior executive with one of the biggest publishers, Pearson Education, told *NEA Today*, "There probably was a time when it didn't involve much of [the authors'] time, but it's different now. Our authors are on the phone weekly, reviewing every step. They're engaged in all the thinking behind the pedagogy." Some math authors, he added, even write many of the lessons.

McFall said producing a new product takes about two years, although a revision might be done in one year. It all begins with a committee of nine to 12 people representing the many different elements of these complex products. The timeline allows for field-testing 10 to 15 lessons, he said. The bulk of the actual image gathering, page design, and software programming takes place during a roughly four-month intensive production phase. That's also when "the manuscript is being written and poured into templates," he explained.

Loewen and Ravitch say publishers spend millions to get a book ready for state adoption.

CRITICAL THINKING

Do you think the writer quoted at the end of this article is from the Left or the Right? Defend your answer. Then check below to see if you were right.

It's from the conservative Fordham Institute's *The Mad, Mad World of Textbook Adoption.*

"Our authors are on the phone weekly."

—Pearson executive Paul McFall

'It's the system, stupid!'

Considering how far removed adoption decisions are from the classroom, it may be surprising that many teachers find some textbooks are really quite good. The reason may be that most of those who churn them out are dedicated people trying to do the right thing in a tough situation.

"These people are not ogres. They want to be proud of what they're doing," says Raleigh McLemore, a sixth-grade teacher in San Leandro, California. McLemore, a vocal critic of textbooks, was hired as an advisor by McGraw-Hill for a year, after they learned that he didn't like their books. "They were not looking at their wallets saying, 'Ha, ha, the money's coming in.' I saw a lot of honest people saying, 'How can we make our book more useful?'" But when McLemore proposed treating fewer topics in more depth, the editors said they had to cover everything on the state list.

As the conservative Fordham Institute said in a report on textbooks, "It's the system, stupid!"

So how did we get here?

According to Ravitch, state textbook adoption began as an effort by Southern states in the late 1800s to keep out anti-Confederacy messages. That may explain why, even today, the South has textbook adoption while almost the entire North is what the industry calls "open territories."

Ravitch tried to enlist the Association of American Publishers in the fight to eliminate state adoption, only to discover they were lobbying to keep it. "The AAP, sadly, uses its considerable clout to protect the adoption process...that benefits a very small number of publishing giants and disadvantages a large number of small publishers who simply cannot afford to meet the expensive requirements of the process," Ravitch wrote in the Fordham Institute report.

Textbook publishing is a super-concentrated industry with three publishing houses—Pearson Education, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, and McGraw-Hill Education—scoring at least 80 percent of sales according to Jay Diskey, executive director of the AAP school division.

Diskey denies that the AAP favors state adoption. But Pearson Vice President Kate Miller said state adoptions "put schedule predictability and dedicated (categorical) funding into instructional materials." She added, "To the extent that there is a barrier for entry [to the industry], that is more dictated by state requirements."

Independent observers from all across the political spectrum, however, agree that teachers should choose textbooks.

"Instructional materials are key parts of the domain where we should rely on frontline educators to make the best decisions for their pupils.... Textbook selection and purchasing decisions should be made as close as possible to the teacher, ideally by the teacher herself." We'll leave it to you to figure out whether that statement comes from Left or Right. But we couldn't have said it better. nea

SOURCE: AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PUBLISHERS

THERE OUGHT TO BE A CONTRACT...

...and in some districts, there is.

WHEN THE SCHOOLS in Hillsborough County, Florida, pick new textbooks, here's how they do it, as provided in their collective bargaining contract:

- A county-wide committee is appointed, most of whose members are classroom teachers appointed by the Hillsborough Classroom Teachers Association.
- The committee reviews all the possible choices and picks at least two (usually more).
- Those books are made available "in sufficient number" so teachers can review them for at least three weeks.
- Teachers select one by secret ballot.

All of this fits the district culture, says Association President Jean Clements. With rare exceptions, administrators "assume automatically that teachers should be involved in decisions about what and how we teach and how we run our schools," she says.

Does the Hillsborough contract sound like yours? If so, count your blessings. Less than 10 percent of the contracts stored in NEA's 8,000-plus database even mention textbooks. But some do give teachers and their students genuine protection from having books imposed on them by administrators who don't fully understand classroom realities.

The language runs the gamut from merely suggesting teacher input to a few, like Hillsborough's, that spell out in detail exactly how teachers will choose their books.

Most contracts leave the final decision up to the school board, which is often the state law.

Many districts give teachers a major role in selecting textbooks even if they are under no contractual obligation, but a contract can guarantee frontline educators a voice, regardless of who happens to be the principal or the superintendent of the moment.

A few contracts require training for teachers in how to use the new books. And some Massachusetts contracts require the board to provide enough funding so "each pupil...has textbooks for his own use."

There are states, of course, that ban bargaining, and some bargaining states exclude bargaining over textbooks.

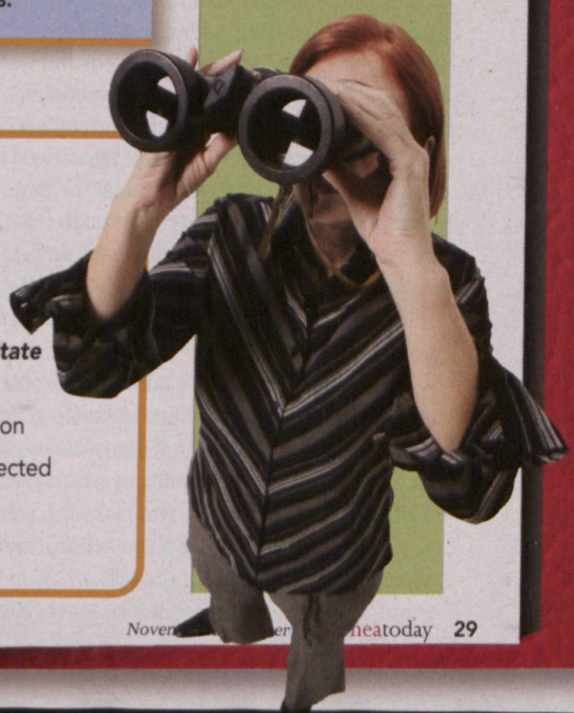
California provides for consultation on textbooks but school boards aren't required to bargain over selection. Nonetheless, in Fremont, the contract says teachers, elected by their colleagues, must make up a majority on textbook selection committees. Fremont Unified District Teachers Association President Jeff Poe says this clause is not controversial. He says it was adopted in 1995 under a superintendent who was a former teacher and "she thought teachers were the only people able to make correct decisions about textbooks."

WRITE AND DISCUSS

Ask your class who should have the most influence in choosing textbooks. (Answers will vary.) Have your students vote.

ADVANCED LEARNERS

Poll your colleagues, parents, administrators, and school board.



MORE TO EXPLORE

PLEASE GO TO: **www.nea.org/ref?textbooks**

FIND LINKS TO:

- ✓ The complete AAP-NEA **textbook survey**
- ✓ A *Rethinking Schools* article on textbooks by **Jana Dean**
- ✓ The Fordham Institute report, ***The Mad, Mad World of State Textbook Adoption***
- ✓ Examples of **bargaining language** about textbook selection
- ✓ An extended **Love Them/Hate Them chart** including selected comments from an informal survey of NEA members
- ✓ A discussion board on textbooks for NEA members

RODIN SCULPTURE: SEAN NEL; PEN AND LIGHTBULB PHOTOS: STOCKBYTE; WOMAN WITH BINOCULARS: GEORGE DOYLE AND CIERAN GRIFFIN

Reclaiming

A teacher union in Morocco curbs the dropout rate—and fights child labor.

BY TIM WALKER

Afaf wipes her brow, claps the sand from her hands, and pulls down the mask that covers her nose and mouth. It's about three in the afternoon, the hour many children are returning home from school, but Afaf, 14, sits in a metal foundry in the Old Medina section of Fez, Morocco. Instead of being in a classroom reading and writing, Afaf spends 10 grueling hours a day sanding teapots and other brass ornaments that will be sold to eager tourists who walk through the marketplace only a few hundred feet away.

"I have never been to school. I have always worked," she says, smiling. Before she came to the metal foundry at age 10, Afaf worked similarly long hours as a "little maid," or *petite bonne* as they are called in Morocco—one of thousands of young girls between the ages of 7 and 15 (sometimes even younger) who serve as full-time housemaids for the city's affluent families.

"School is not that important. We all need to work to help support the family." Afaf looks down at the large worktable covered with sand and brass teapots. "Although I do get tired and it does get very warm in here." She shrugs, smiles again, replaces the mask over her face, and returns to her work.

Afaf doesn't miss school because she has never attended, and probably never will.

Sara Marbouh, also 14, knew school and loved it—the joy of learning, the friendship of her classmates, and the guidance and kindness of her teachers. That's why she was heartbroken the day her mother told her she would not return to school the next morning. Sara, then 12 years old, was picked up and taken to a house far away, where she worked as a live-in housemaid.

"I was shocked," Sara recalls. "I cried and cried." Once a bright and outgoing student, Sara now faced a bleak but not uncommon fate shared by hundreds of thousands of other children in Morocco, a country that has one of the highest child labor rates in the Middle East and North Africa.

Amazingly, however, only seven weeks later, Sara was back in school, reunited with her classmates, teachers, and her favorite subjects—math, science, and English—and overjoyed at being where she knew she and other children belong.

Sara's rescue from child labor is a victory for Morocco's leading teachers union, the Syndicat Nationale de l'Enseignement (SNE), which collaborated with international partners to design and implement an extraordinary local initiative to curb the dropout rate in five of Fez's most disadvantaged schools. The program taps into the expertise and organization of the union and the commitment of educators to promote education as an antidote to the economic and cultural factors that support the cycle of global poverty and child labor.

"Educators around the world have a duty to fight child labor," says Abdelaziz Mountassir, vice-president of SNE. "Yes, we fight for the rights of educators, but also we want to mobilize them to fight for the human rights for all children. Education is a human right."

Undervaluing education, even at the expense of children's rights, is prevalent in many developing nations, where citizens are still accustomed to living in "survival mode." NEA strongly believes that a commitment to quality education for every child is essential to dismantle the economic pillars of child labor.

"Poverty, education, and child labor are inextricably linked," says Jan Eastman, deputy general secretary of Education International. "While a root cause is poverty, the way out is through education."

PHOTOS: TOP RIGHT: EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL; MIDDLE: TIM WALKER; BOTTOM: SNE; BACKGROUND ART: REPLICKATER

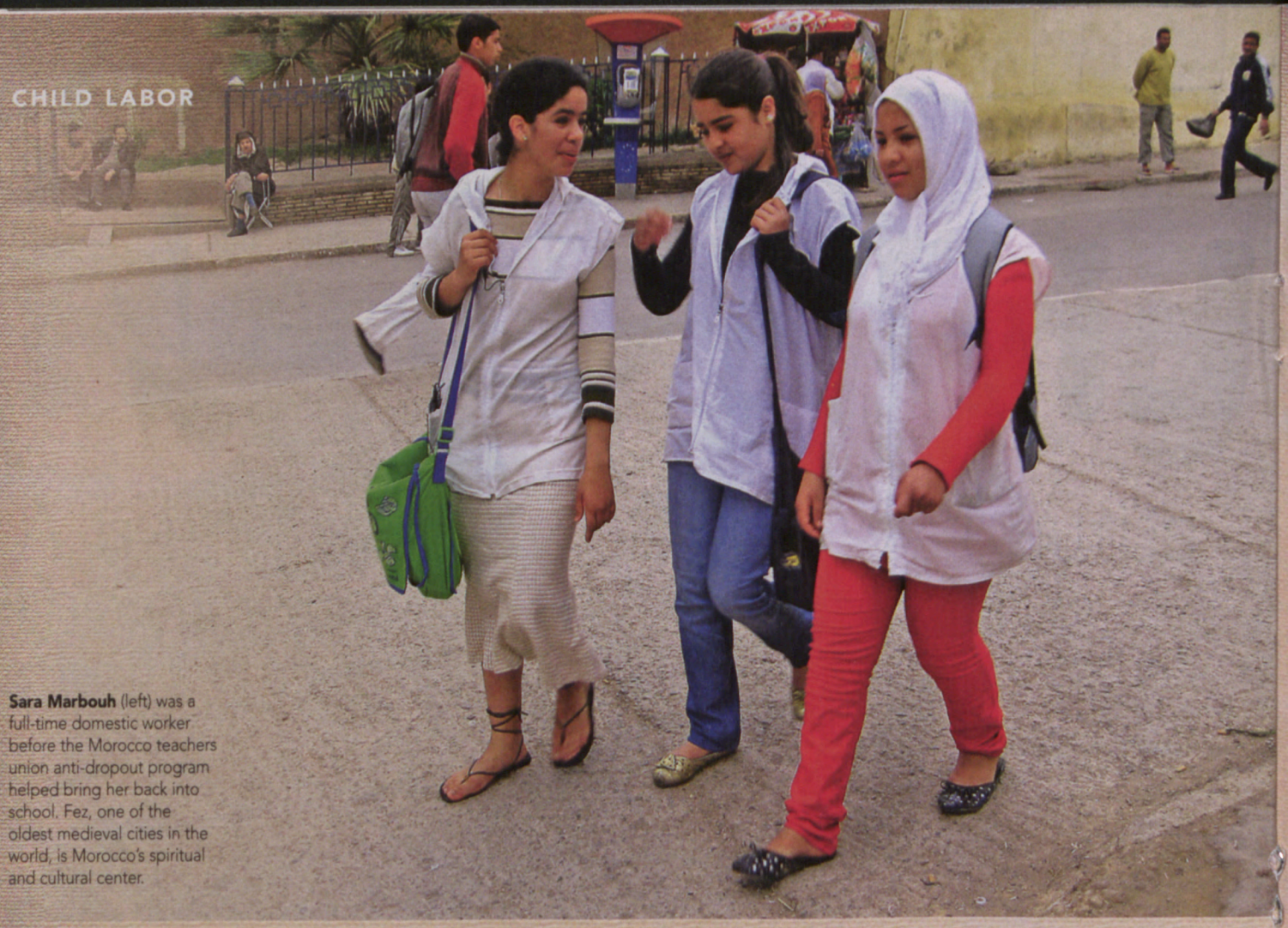
Lives

Sara Marbouh (right) attends school in Fez. Many child laborers in Fez (below) never go to school or drop out to work in the handicrafts industry. They can be seen lining the streets along the popular marketplaces.

With a membership that spans more than 170 nations, Education International (EI), which NEA helped found in 1993, is the largest federation of trade unions worldwide. In addition to advocating for the rights of educators everywhere, EI promotes education as a key weapon in the fight against social and economic inequality. The scourge of child labor is a momentous obstacle, so EI has been rallying teacher unions and its global partners to collaborate on ways to improve access to education around the world.

According to the U.N.'s International Labour Organisation, more than 165 million child laborers are scattered across the globe. From construction sites in Afghanistan to factories in Albania to farms in rural Morocco to domestic workers in El Salvador, children between the ages of 6 and 14 work long hours in grim, often dangerous conditions intolerable for even the fittest adults. Sadly, millions of these children are exposed not only to exploitation in the labor market, but also are vulnerable to slavery, child trafficking, and prostitution.

In Morocco, child labor is concentrated in the agricultural sector in the countryside, but in urban areas such as Fez and Marrakech, the crafts industry—a major attraction for foreign tourists—is highly dependent on the work of young children. The streets in the crowded Old Medina marketplace are lined with children as young as 6 or 7, kneeling all day carving shoes, carrying rolled-up carpets twice their size on their shoulders, or using all their strength to polish brass plates.



Sara Marbouh (left) was a full-time domestic worker before the Morocco teachers union anti-dropout program helped bring her back into school. Fez, one of the oldest medieval cities in the world, is Morocco's spiritual and cultural center.

Common economic and social factors fuel child labor rates across regions, including entrenched poverty, the absence of legal protections, and a cultural acceptance of child labor. The benefits of education can seem vague and remote for families struggling to put food on the table.

"My family depends on me," Karim explains, his face blackened by soot and grease. Now 18, he has worked in the same metal foundry as Afaf since he was 11. "What can I do? What will my mother do if I go to school?" he asks.

Sara's mother, Malika Hinda, candidly admits she did not see the value of education for her five children. She was ashamed at sending Sara away to work, but she thought it was necessary to help sustain her family. Hinda, who never attended school herself, had watched her eldest son finish school, only to spend days looking for work that never came.

"I did not want that for Sara," she explains.

Headmaster Mohammed Glioui had watched helplessly as many of his students quit school to go to work; the dropout rate had been at an alarming level for years. When Sara, a bright and popular student, left school in 2005, Glioui and his staff had the resources to finally do something about it. The previous year, SNE launched its initiative aimed at changing the economic and cultural forces that drive kids out of school and into work. Glioui

PHOTOS TOP: DONATELLA MONTALDO/EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL; BOTTOM: TIM WALKER

"Educators around the world have a duty to fight child labor... education is a human right." —Abdelaziz Mountassir

and his teachers are part of the dedicated team of educators who are on the ground in Fez tackling the dropout problem in five of the city's poorest schools.

The program deploys short- and long-term solutions to curb the number of dropouts by calling attention to the rights of children and "rebranding" education for both students and their parents. Although children such as Sara have been brought back into school from work, the primary objective is to prevent dropouts from occurring in the first place.

Supported by three Dutch organizations, including the teachers' union AOb, the program funds basic structural and pedagogical improvements in each of the five schools. The money has provided a cleaner, more attractive learning environment in each school. New libraries now house small but vital collections of books, and an infusion of arts and music programs has stimulated student interest.

The program also helps parents pay for such basic necessities as book bags, school supplies, uniforms, even glasses for students who can't see the blackboard. Concurrently, the union also encourages parents to look beyond the measly wages their children could earn now and understand that only education can break the cycle of poverty that has gripped their families for generations.

When Sara dropped out, headmaster Glioui and his staff held a series of conversations with Sara's parents to persuade them to allow their daughter to return to school. Relieved that the union would bear many of the school fees and convinced that Sara's education was indeed valuable, her parents eventually granted her return.

Another critical component of the program is teacher professional development. Many educators, despite being devoted classroom professionals, did not view education as a component of children's rights. Thanks to training on how they could be stronger advocates for students' legal protections, teachers at the five schools have become, in essence, child labor "monitors."

"The program has done an outstanding job in educating teachers on the severity of the problem," says Mountassir. "And they have embraced their new role. In addition to teaching, they have become human rights activists for their children as well."

Rabia Mouyssi, a teacher at the Ouinat Alhajaj School, says the program has strengthened the bonds between teacher and student.

"We always have a sense of solidarity between us," she explains. "I'm their teacher, but also their mother, their friend, everything. They are like my own children."

After four years, the results have been extraordinary. In 2003, one year before the program began, 1,381 young students at the targeted five schools dropped out. By 2005, that number had fallen to 212, 116 in the second year, and 121 in the third year.

Originally budgeted for four years, SNE's program has now received funding to potentially expand beyond Fez to other struggling cities. Boughour Hussein, headmaster of the 18 November School says the program's success cannot be overstated. "Leaving school can be like a death sentence," he says. "It is as if we are giving [these children] a new life."

Now a student at Abbas Benani School, Sara understands how fortunate she and the other children touched by SNE's dropout program have been. Back in school for two years now, she still recalls the cruelty and humiliation she experienced at the hands of her former employers. She speaks with a hint of bitterness when she recalls her ordeal as a live-in servant: "I was deprived of basic human kindness. There is a huge difference between the cruelty of my employers and the kindness of my teachers. I can't describe the joy at being back at school."

Sara's mother shares her happiness and is convinced that education is a worthwhile pursuit for her daughter. Without it, she says, girls cannot provide for themselves—and besides, in today's world, an educated young woman will have an easier time finding a husband.

Sara has other plans.

"I want to study hard because I want to be a pediatrician," she says. "I want to help take care of the next generation." nea

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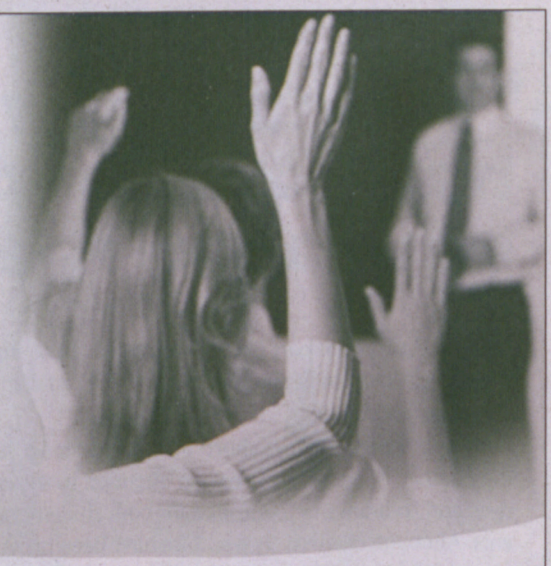

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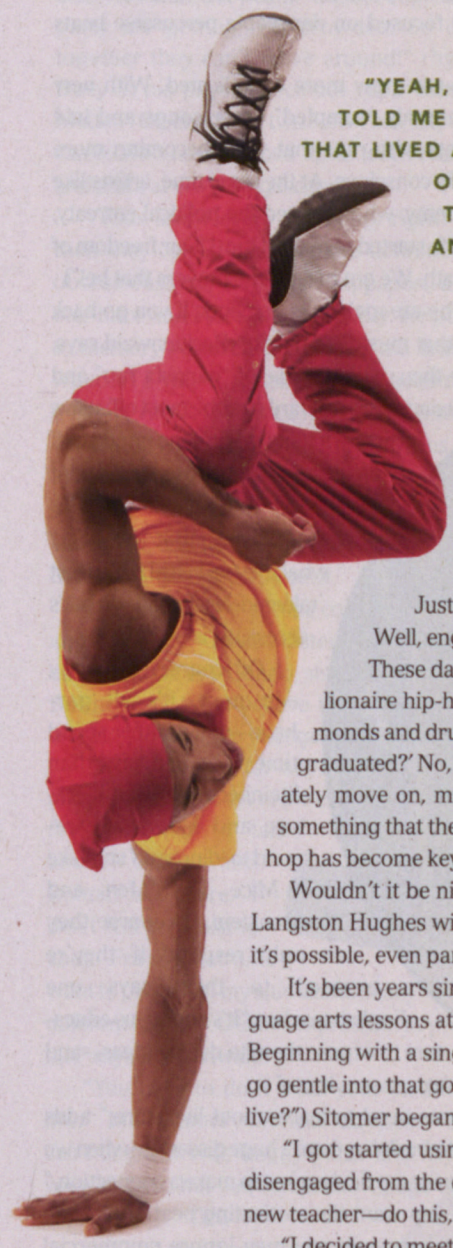
YO! FROM TUPAC TO THE BARD

Educators are stepping to a new beat, making use of hip-hop music in their classrooms.

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY



"YEAH, THIS ALBUM IS DEDICATED TO ALL THE TEACHERS THAT TOLD ME I'D NEVER AMOUNT TO NOTHIN', TO ALL THE PEOPLE THAT LIVED ABOVE THE BUILDINGS THAT I WAS HUSTLIN' IN FRONT OF THAT CALLED THE POLICE ON ME WHEN I WAS JUST TRYIN' TO MAKE SOME MONEY TO FEED MY DAUGHTERS, AND ALL THE N-- IN THE STRUGGLE—YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN'?"

— The Notorious B.I.G.

Ooooh! Did he just say the N-word?

He did. And that's just one of the reasons that many educators give a little, "eh, I just don't think so," when it comes to using hip-hop in the classroom. Much of it is profane or violent, offensive to women and gays, and just...dangerous. Ugh. And you see the kids listening, rapt, heads bobbing, like some kind of genius prophet is speaking through those ear buds.

Just think: what's it doing to them?

Well, engaging them, for one thing.

These days, you can't turn the dial without tuning into chart-topping, millionaire hip-hop artists like 50 Cent or Ludacris, rapping street-smart about diamonds and drugs, poverty, and police brutality. (Sings Kanye West: "They say, 'Oh you graduated?' No, I decided I was finished chasing y'all dreams.") While you might immediately move on, muttering, "This is the new American jazz?" many of your students hear something that they believe speaks directly to them. Like it or not, over the past 20 years, hip-hop has become key to the canon of contemporary music.

Wouldn't it be nice if they listened to you with the same attention? Or if they could quote Langston Hughes with the same fluency? Well, consider this: Many of your colleagues believe it's possible, even paramount, to use hip-hop to build exactly those kinds of connections.

It's been years since California teacher Alan Sitomer added a little bumpin' flava to his language arts lessons at Lynwood High School, transforming his classroom and his students, too. Beginning with a single bridge that he built between Welsh poet Dylan Thomas (he of "Do not go gentle into that good night") and murdered rapper Tupac Shakur ("The question is, will I live?") Sitomer began finding ways to bring "fresh relevance to timeless themes."

"I got started using hip-hop in the classroom because my students were spectacularly disengaged from the classic curriculum. They roll out all these materials when you become a new teacher—do this, do that—but the kids don't see their lives reflected in those materials.

"I decided to meet them where they live."

GRAFFITI ART: SERGEY PRYGOV; RECORD: YULIYAN VELCHEV; PATTERN: POTAPOV ALEXANDER; BREAKDANCER: IMAGE100/CORBIS; SHAKESPEARE: IOFOTO

There is one thing you can do as a teacher, that's more important than anything else, to help them and help you, suggests Sarah Montgomery-Glinski, co-director of the educational initiative at the New York-based Hip-Hop Association and a high school special education teacher herself. And it's this:

"Connect with your students. Don't be afraid."

Gettin' Jiggy Wit' It

Where they once stared blankly and scored near the bottom of standardized tests, Sitomer's students now are energized learners, strong academic performers, and proof that it's possible to use hip-hop as a tool for engagement and resource for lesson planning. And, as for Sitomer, a former California State Teacher of the Year, his methods have become so sought-after that he's become a book author and coveted speaker.

"When I started this, I was vilified. 'That's not real teaching!'" Sitomer recalls. "But when you look at my scores, I have some of the highest California exit-exam scores in the state. [Ninety-eight percent of his kids passed, compared with 57 percent of Lynwood's overall.] I attribute that to the fact that my students are engaged in learning....Once the students are engaged, you can go anywhere."

Your colleagues who use hip-hop in the classroom almost all consider it a tool to get somewhere else. This isn't Hip-Hop 101. "I'm teaching artistry, not the artist," Sitomer says.

For him, the lyrics—scrubbed of all profanity, misogyny, homophobia, or other offense—offer a valid source of imagery, alliteration, personification, or other literary devices. Often he'll pair a hip-hop artist with a classic poet to teach a specific standard. Sometimes, because the 40-something doesn't even pretend to know what kids are listening to, he'll assign his students, who are mostly Black or Hispanic, the task of finding answers in their own digital collections.

For Adam Recktenwald, an art teacher who teaches a multidisciplinary humanities course at suburban East Brunswick High School in New Jersey, even the questionable language offers opportunities. During a unit on diversity, discussions about stereotypical language, the way that we communicate with each other, whether positively or negatively, can be stimulated by hip-hop. "What exactly is he talking about? Why are you listening to that? Do you really understand what he's saying to you?"

(You might not have any idea what he's really saying either. Recktenwald advises taking a look at www.urbandictionary.com, a sometimes unreliable, often shocking guide to the way kids talk.)

Modern culture connects with kids, he's found. Clips of race comics, like Dave Chappelle or Russell Peters, bring home more lessons about censorship and societal values. "A lot of our students feel our society is post-racist. Like, 'We're so not-racist it's OK to be racist again....'

"We give them an opportunity to talk about things that they wouldn't otherwise—and these are things they should talk about before they go away to college and enter a larger group that's even more diverse," Recktenwald says. "There are definitely students that have wake-up calls...that are learning to make connections."

Bring The NOISE

A quick history lesson: Hip-hop first appeared in New York City in the 1970s, mostly in Black communities. At first, it was mostly unrecorded and focused on danceable percussive beats and narrative raps.

In the 1980s, the music grew more complicated. With new technology, artists commonly "sampled" other songs and laid down multi-layered beats with raps that were becoming more metaphorical and socially conscious. At the same time, artists like LL Cool J and Public Enemy, who released the political entreaty, "Fight the Power," in 1989, started to make it big. ("Our freedom of speech is freedom or death. We got to fight the powers that be!")

"These are artists who are making statements. If you go back and listen to that music, it's poetic," Recktenwald says.

Since then, with the rise of "gangsta rap" and commercial rewards for the most offensive artists, it's tough to find the good stuff, Recktenwald acknowledges. "A lot of people think hip-hop equals pornography. But probably what they've heard is the least talented, least poetic. What's accessible is garbage."

Of course, to many educators, it's all garbage—you'd rather spend time with Ludacris than Steinbeck? "I teach literature and kids really respond to 'dinosaur' stuff like *Of Mice and Men* and *Frankenstein*. Of course they can only respond if they're exposed to them," says one English teacher. "It's our job as educators to expose them to decent ideas—and combat crass culture."

"Students need to learn about literature," adds another. "We're doing them a huge disservice when we manipulate the curriculum just to make a connection."

Still, if you want the motivating beat of hip-hop without its baggage, you may ignore commercial

"I'm teaching artistry, not the artist," says California teacher **Alan Sitomer** of his hip-hop lessons.

DISK: PHOTODISC; PHOTO: SCOTT BUSCHMAN

artists altogether. In recent years, the buzz around hip-hop educational products has reached a new crescendo.

One of the first was Brooklyn-based Flocabulary ("Rocking harder than your grandma's chair," www.flocabulary.com), which started off with SAT words and definitions set to catchy raps but has since branched out to U.S. history, science, and math curricula. More recently, Black Gold Edutainment, www.hiphop-edu.com, wowed audiences at the 2008 NEA Representative Assembly.

Or take a look at some of your colleagues, like Detroit-area middle school teacher D.J. Duey, www.mrduey.com. "Solid! People at the party are getting real crowded. So close together they can't move around!" rhymes Duey in his physical science rap, "State of Matter." Or, check out two New York City educators who have teamed up to teach reading and math at www.sing2school.com.

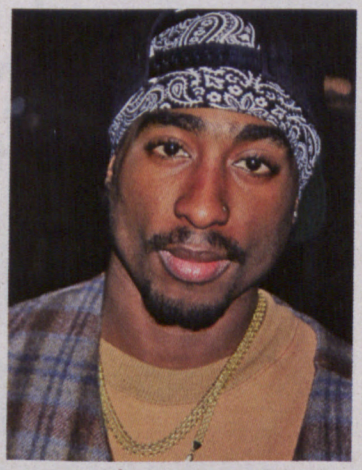
"Kids know every rap song, right? But then they can't remember the definition of obsequiousness," says Alex Rappaport, a former tutor and Flocabulary founder. He points to memory research that shows the brain is wired in a way that makes music helpful for memory recall. (There's a reason you remember all the lyrics to *Summer of '69*!) Plus, the kids just dig it. "We've been in a lot of urban schools, especially in New York and California, and the response is: 'This is something I'm interested in. I get it.'"

Rappaport is a recent college graduate and both East Coast hipsters, Recktenwald and Montgomery-Glinski, also are in their 20s. But none of them believe that hip-hop is a teaching tool for the youngest workers only.

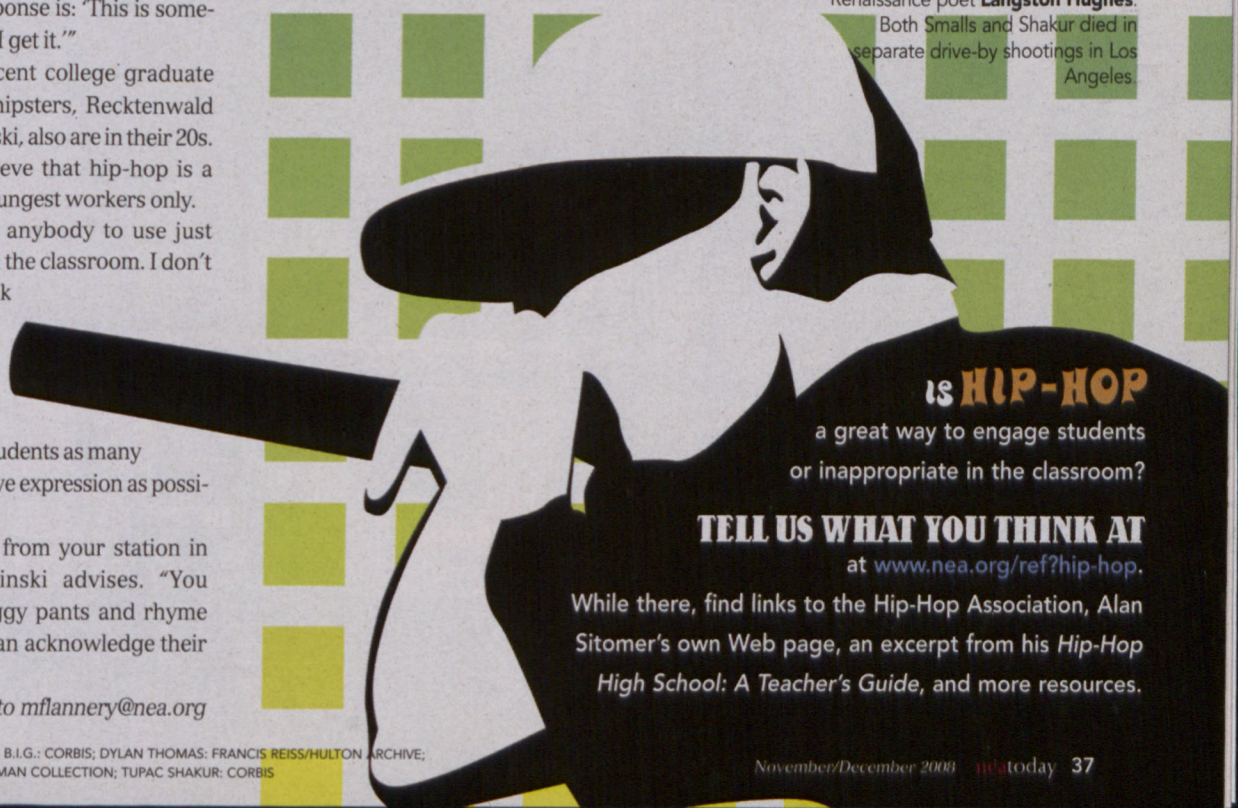
"There's room for anybody to use just about any form of art in the classroom. I don't feel ashamed to talk about Greek and Roman sculpture. I don't feel silly talking about Frank Sinatra. I want to present to my students as many different forms of creative expression as possible," says Recktenwald.

"You have to do it from your station in life," Montgomery-Glinski advises. "You can't come in with baggy pants and rhyme your lessons, but you can acknowledge their experiences." nea

Send comments to mflannery@nea.org



Clockwise from top left: Rap star Biggie Smalls, also known as the **Notorious B.I.G.**; Welsh poet **Dylan Thomas**; hip-hop artist and poet **Tupac Shakur**; and Harlem Renaissance poet **Langston Hughes**. Both Smalls and Shakur died in separate drive-by shootings in Los Angeles.



IS HIP-HOP
a great way to engage students or inappropriate in the classroom?

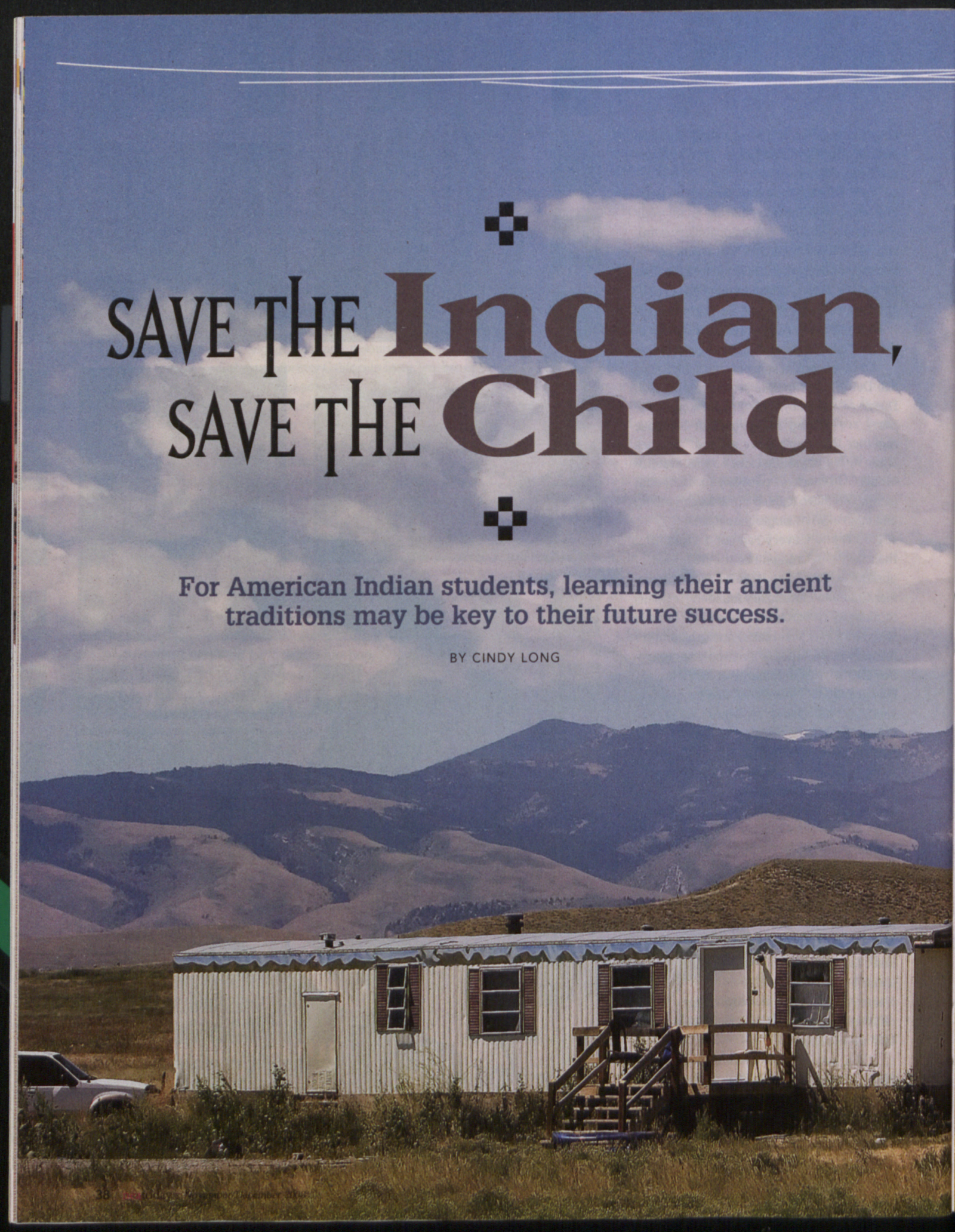
TELL US WHAT YOU THINK AT
at www.nea.org/ref?hip-hop.
While there, find links to the Hip-Hop Association, Alan Sitomer's own Web page, an excerpt from his *Hip-Hop High School: A Teacher's Guide*, and more resources.

RAPPER ART: NIKONOV; NOTORIOUS B.I.G.: CORBIS; DYLAN THOMAS: FRANCIS REISS/HULTON ARCHIVE; LANGSTON HUGHES; ARNOLD NEWMAN COLLECTION; TUPAC SHAKUR: CORBIS

SAVE THE Indian, SAVE THE Child

For American Indian students, learning their ancient traditions may be key to their future success.

BY CINDY LONG



When eighth-grader Gabby Thunder speaks Arapaho at home, it brings hope to her grandmother that the old ways will live on. To Gabby, it brings cultural pride and a sense of rootedness to her people, even as she looks to a future away from "the rez."

Gabby is taking an Arapaho language class at Wyoming Indian Middle School on the Wind River Indian Reservation in central Wyoming. In the small village of Ethete—pronounced EETH-eh-tee, meaning "good" in Arapaho—the school is next door to the Wind River Tribal College and across a lonely intersection from the Little Wind Casino.

"At our school, we get to learn about the heritage of our tribes," says Gabby. "We learn our language, but we also get to learn traditions like archery, storytelling, singing, dancing, and drumming—even hand games."

Gabby doesn't know if she'll return home to the reservation after she attends college, probably at the University of Phoenix. After all, the jobs are in the cities. Like many reservations, Wind River is plagued by poverty and high unemployment, and many residents depend on per-capita checks, their share of the tribe's income from casinos and leased tribal lands. Alcoholism is chronic and, more recently, meth has found its way onto the reservation, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

The educators and administrators of Wyoming Indian Schools—comprising an elementary, middle, and high school—hope to break that cycle by getting back to their roots. It's the only public school system in the state where Shoshone and Arapaho languages and culture are part of the curriculum. Their strategy appears to be paying off—test scores show Native American students at the Indian Schools achieve more academically than those at schools where their culture is not a part of everyday studies.

Of the more than 300 languages spoken in the United States at the time the Europeans first made contact on American soil, only 175 remain, according to the Indigenous Language Institute. That number will go down to 20 by 2050, unless new generations pick them up.

Fortunately, with the passage of the Native American Languages Act of 1990 and the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006, there's been a resurgence of Native studies at reservation schools across the country. It's not only saving languages from extinction, it's instilling a sense of pride and purpose among Native children.

"Our people hold our children sacred," says Dodie White, a longtime social studies teacher at Wyoming Indian Middle School and member of the Arapaho tribe. "They are our greatest asset, and we work to connect them with our cultural heritage, so they know who they are, so they have purpose."

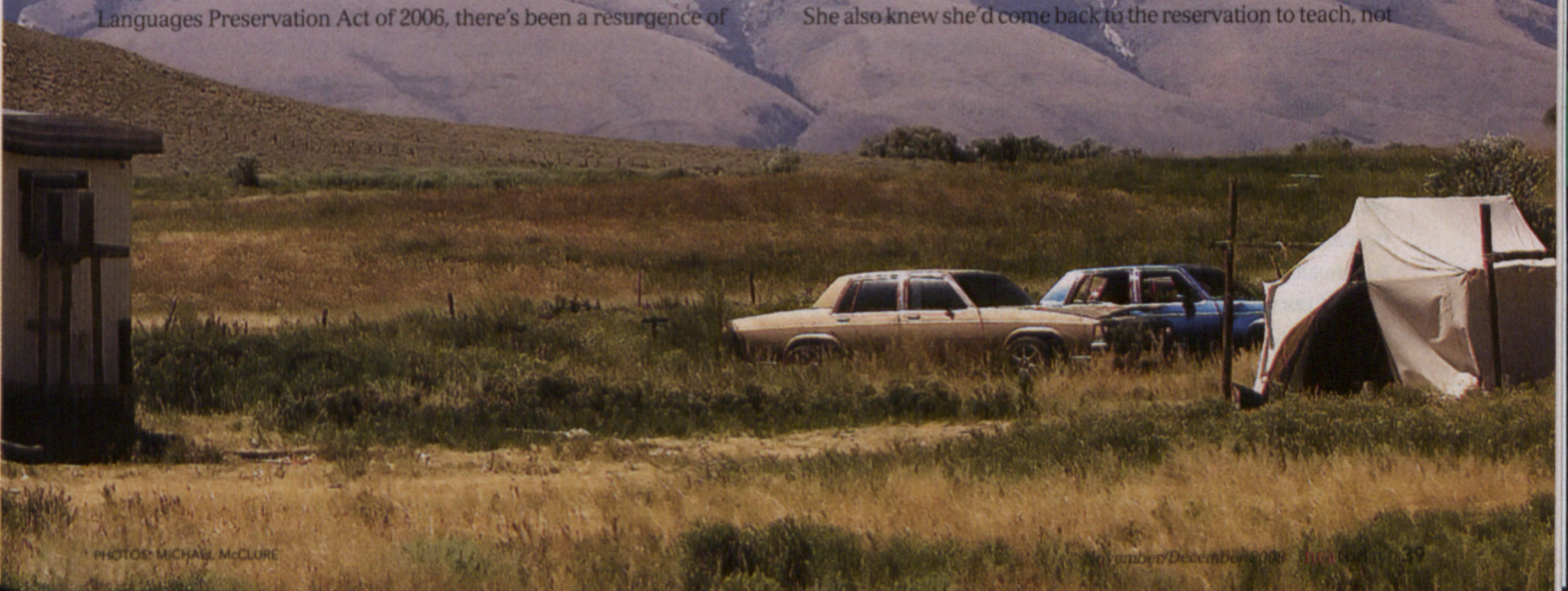
According to research, cultural context is essential for American Indian students to succeed in school and go on to college. White says the approach has taken off. "At the University of Wyoming, for example, there's now a course for student teachers called 'Teachers of American Indian Children,'" she says. "And it's really working. Data from 2005 showed that Natives had the highest dropout rate in the country, but the graduation rate has risen every year since. The key is adding the culture."

White grew up on the Wind River Reservation, which is home to more than 5,000 members of the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho tribes. It's the third-largest reservation in the country, sitting on more than 2 million acres of the windswept Wind River Basin, a desert plain dotted by sagebrush and ringed by the snow-capped peaks of the Wind River Range and Owl Creek Mountains on the horizon.

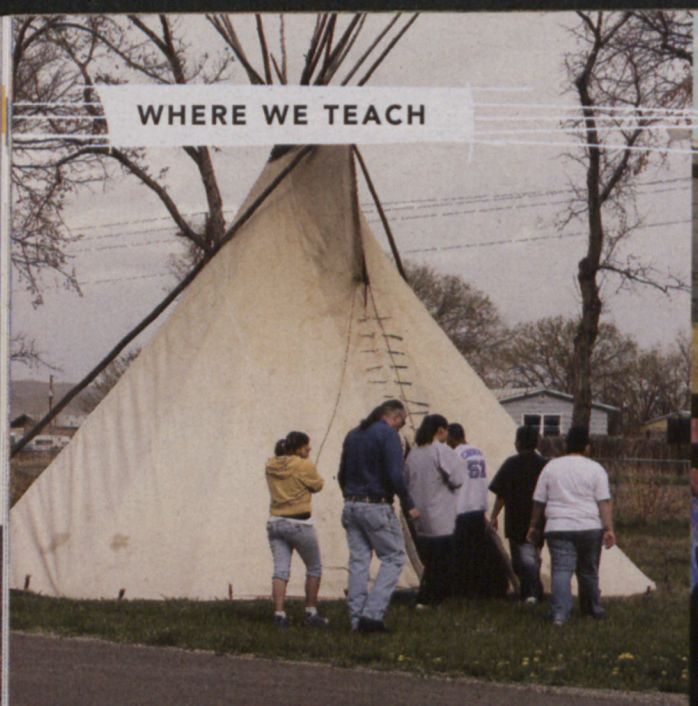
She graduated from Wyoming Indian High School in 1991. "Like my students today, I was a child with goals and dreams, but I had to overcome obstacles," she says. White was a teenage mother who dealt with alcoholism and abuse among those close to her. "I see and I know what these kids are going through," she says, her eyes welling with tears as she recalls a student who struggled to stay awake in class. He apologetically explained that he was tired because the night before, his drunk uncle had fought with the family until dawn. "As a people," says White, "we've always had to overcome obstacles."

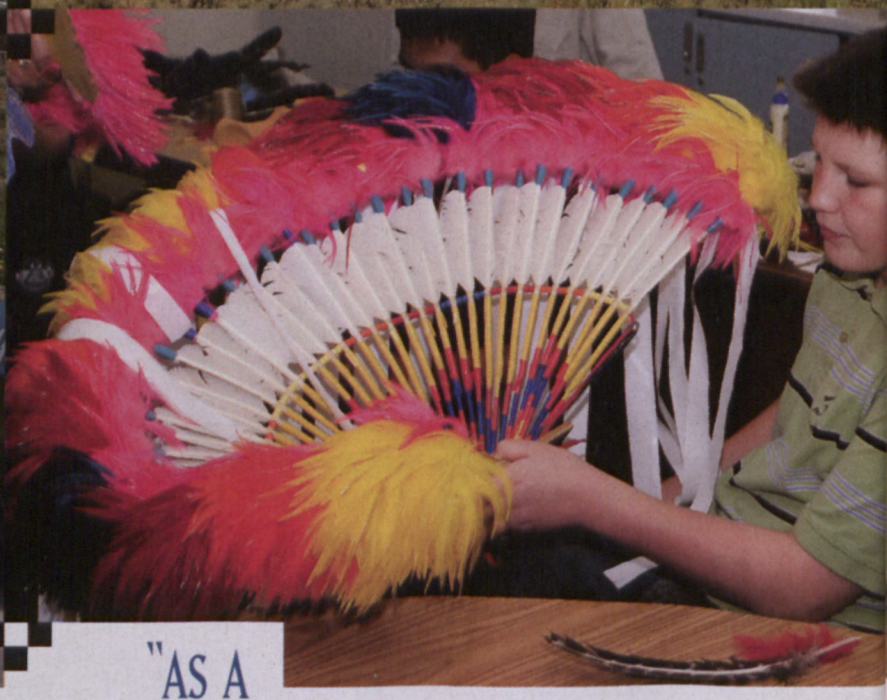
She knew early on she wanted to become an educator—she had worked alongside her own teachers in high school as a tutor to her classmates. She eventually earned a tribal scholarship and studied full-time at the University of Wyoming while feeding her two young daughters with food stamps. "It was a struggle," she says.

She also knew she'd come back to the reservation to teach, not



PHOTOS: MICHAEL McCLURE





only to help preserve the heritage of the tribe but also to serve as a role model. "When they look at me they think, 'If she can do it, I can, too,'" White says.

White isn't the only tribal role model. At every level of school, White says Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho tribe members work alongside core curriculum educators to preserve "the old ways."

One of them, Cora Willow, teaches Arapaho language and culture at Wyoming Indian Middle School.

On the school's annual Heritage Day, Willow greets a class of seventh-graders filing into her classroom, asking them in Arapaho to settle down and take their seats. *"Ho'hou,"* she says. *Thank you.*

She's teaching the students an ancient hand game called koxouhtiit, played with red willow sticks gathered by the river, sanded down, and adorned with beads and feathers. There's a guessing stick, hiding sticks, and point sticks, and as the children play, Willow puts on a CD of traditional Arapaho songs. Willow plays the game at home with her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. It's a social game, she says, traditionally played during wintertime where everyone would gather together to catch up on the news. "They'd play all night, and then feast," Willow says.

> "AS A PEOPLE, WE'VE ALWAYS HAD TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES."
>
> —Dodie White

A quiet woman, with graying black hair parted in the middle and falling nearly to her waist, Willow was at first shy about teaching. But she wanted to help preserve the ways of her people—after all, she remembers when the ancient traditions were being stamped out.

After American Indians were moved to reservations, their children were sent to mission and government boarding schools in the late 1800s. The goal was complete assimilation, or, as Dodie White says, to "kill the Indian, save the child."

The schools, which operated until the mid-20th century, punished children for speaking their native language, isolated them from their parents and grandparents, and forced them to speak English. In 2000, Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Kevin Gover, apologized publicly for the U.S. government's treatment of American Indians—which he likened to ethnic cleansing—including the brutalization carried out at the boarding schools.

A group of elders on the reservation who remember the boarding schools were determined to build an institution that would bring quality education and cultural dignity to reservation children. The Wyoming

Through New Eyes
Examining the Culture of Your School
Richard DuFour
Through New Eyes
Examining the Culture of Your School

Opposite: Students celebrate Heritage Day by touring a tepee, observing a flag ceremony by Arapaho and Shoshone veterans, and making traditional bustles. Above: **Dodie White** connects students with their cultural heritage.

Indian School opened as a BIA school in 1972. In 1983 it became a public K–12 school system.

The elders chose to call the school Wyoming Indian Schools after their state and because tribal veterans said they went into wars to fight as "Indians" rather than as "Native Americans." The school's mascot—the Chiefs—was named just as purposefully.

Young men traditionally went out to earn valor as hunters and warriors. "Now those days are gone," says Wyoming Indian Middle School cultural advisor Jenny Runsclosetolodge. "Today the way our young men and women bring honor is through education." Those who hold the highest honor are the tribal chiefs.

The students are proud to be Chiefs and are consistently recognized for good sportsmanship. "They know they represent their community and their tribe when they go off the reservation to play," says Runsclosetolodge. "They carry themselves with respect, and they treat others respectfully."

They're not always treated with the same regard. The Chiefs are best known for their boys' high school basketball team, portrayed in the 2000 documentary titled *Chiefs*. Over the years, the basketball team has been a repeated target of hostility. Once they found a dead deer inside their travel bus. At another game, a police officer checked the team's water to make sure they hadn't spiked it with liquor. They've been greeted by opposing team fans' racist "Indian war cry" whoops, threats that they'd be scalped, and hollers of "Go back to the rez!"

Runsclosetolodge was a cheerleader when she went to Wyoming Indian High School and remembers being called a "stupid squaw" by an opposing team's fan.

But the games went on, and the Chiefs kept winning—they accrued five state championships under Coach Al Redman. Understanding and tolerance have increased in the mostly White area of Wyoming that surrounds the reservation, and the Wyoming Indian students continue to maintain their self-respect. Today the halls are filled with students showing Chief pride by wearing their team's T-shirts, as well as shirts that say "Native for Life," "The Future is Ours," and "Quitting is Not an Option."

John Soundingsides is the younger brother of Brian Soundingsides, the gifted athlete immortalized in *Chiefs*. The younger Soundingsides plans to follow his brother onto the high school varsity basketball team, and then go to college—his pick is Kansas State. After that, maybe the NBA, or maybe to work on rockets.

Right now, he's content to work on cars on the reservation and continue his studies at Wyoming Indian Schools. One of his best subjects is the Arapaho language class, which he says is important to him and his family so "we can hold on to our traditional ways." His favorite word is one that will serve him well in school, in college, and beyond. It's *"Tous,"* or *hello.* nea

Send comments on this story to clong@nea.org

PHOTOS: MICHAEL McCLURE

HAPPY.....? MERRY.....?

If teaching the holidays has you at a loss, read on.

BY TIM WALKER

November marks the beginning of annual holiday hoopla, and as students are singing, eating special meals, decorating their homes, gift-giving (and receiving!), and visiting family and friends, their excitement is sure to spill over into the classroom. And that's OK! Isn't it?

The United States has always been a religiously diverse nation, but the patchwork of faiths—Sikh, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian, to name just a few—is found in more communities than ever before. Looking at holidays is a great way to engage elementary-age students in examining religious diversity, as long as schools make sure different faiths are represented in schoolwide or classroom activities.

But school policies can sometimes create more problems than they are designed to solve. Last year, the Oak Lawn school district in Illinois, responding to a Muslim parent's request to hang crescent moon lights in classrooms for Ramadan, considered getting out of the business of recognizing religious holidays altogether. When the school board took up the question of whether to ban holiday observances on school grounds, they met with community outcry. Instead, the district decided merely to add Ramadan to its list of recognized holidays.

The teachers we talked to say there's no need to shut out the holidays altogether, just tailor activities to fit the demographics of your classroom, always err on the side of inclusiveness, and make sure your teaching is in accordance with district policies.

Teach, don't celebrate

Kids love the holidays, and hey, you're no Scrooge either. But there's a difference between celebrating and teaching about celebration. According to the Anti-Defamation League and other organizations, it's not appropriate to celebrate any one religious holiday in the classroom, in essence favoring one religion over others. And obviously encouraging or compelling students to participate in any religious activities, such as prayer, during any type of holiday festivity or classroom activity is forbidden.

"We don't celebrate, so to speak, but we teach about celebrations, and this is just as much fun for the students," says Rosita Force, a teacher at Franklin Elementary in Tulsa, Oklahoma. "Young children have a natural curiosity, especially about how other people observe different holidays. It's still enjoyable, but it's about respect."

This does not mean, however, that classrooms cannot display or use holiday-related art, religious symbols, drama, music, and literature if they are being used for learning purposes. Students should be free to incorporate religious symbols in a classroom art activity, for example, but you should generally stay neutral, neither encouraging nor discouraging these creations.

Global learning

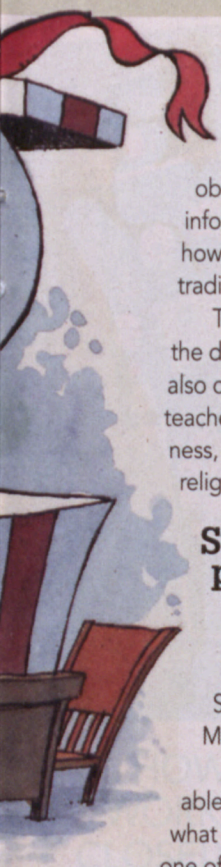
"Teaching about religious holidays," says Force, "is a great way to widen students' global view at a young age—to help them become global thinkers."

Force teaches technology and regularly has students create PowerPoint presentations on different religious observances.

nea.org

VISIT WWW.NEA.ORG/REF?HOLIDAYS FOR MORE LINKS AND IDEAS FOR ADDRESSING RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS IN YOUR CLASSROOM.

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID CLARK



"They are always fascinated to learn that Christmas is not the only widespread religious observance in the world," she says. "They find the information but also feed their natural curiosity about how people around the world observe religious traditions."

The idea is to help students develop respect for the differences in religious holidays and festivals while also drawing connections on how they are similar. Many teachers use a thematic framework—peace, thankfulness, forgiveness, compassion—to connect different religions and their traditions throughout the year.

Students and parents can play a role

No, they can't draft your lesson plan, but letting students take the initiative on the learning process works well with holidays, says Jessica Saliba, who teaches at Kane Elementary in Marlborough, Massachusetts.

"The holiday season is a time when children are able to take ownership of what they learn as well as what they are able to contribute," Saliba says. "It is also one of the many times during the year when I'm learning just as much as I am teaching!" Remember, Saliba says, that students' families are happy to be invited to tell how they observe religious holidays.

"Parents and their kids have shared stories and games about how they celebrate holidays. We also ask them to contribute to a holiday recipe book. I compile it every year and each student gets a copy. Holidays are family affairs so the more you can involve parents in what you are doing in the classroom, the better. I've learned a lot from the parents."

> "We don't celebrate, so to speak, but we teach about celebrations, and this is just as much fun for the students." — **Rosita Force**

Look beyond December 25th

Don't limit your activities about religious diversity to the winter holiday season. Even if you are confident about the inclusiveness of your approach, it's misguided to explore holiday observances only in late December.

There are observances taking place throughout the year: Ramadan began on September 1 this year and lasted 30 days, during which time many Muslim students are fasting during the day. Diwali, a festival observed by many Indian families, began in October, and the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah sometimes begins a few weeks before Christmas.

Of course, holidays shouldn't be the only way you explore diverse religions and cultures, but you can use them to help young learners draw important connections.

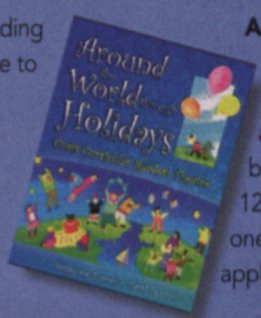
RESOURCES

Looking for more guidance to help you create inclusive and appropriate activities around religious holidays? Check these out:

RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: Teaching About the Holidays
www.adl.org/religion _ps_2004/teaching.asp
The Anti-Defamation League lays out the basic dos and don'ts in this publication—from conducting school assemblies to observing religious holidays to religious symbols in the classroom. You may also want to check out ADL's **The December Dilemma** (www.adl.org/issue_education/december_dilemma_2004) for a more detailed set of guidelines and an extensive reading list.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
www.firstamendmentcenter.org/pdf/fcgchapter10.pdf
Chapter 10 of the First Amendment Center's "Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in Public Schools" provides brief answers to commonly asked questions about appropriate policies for religious holidays.

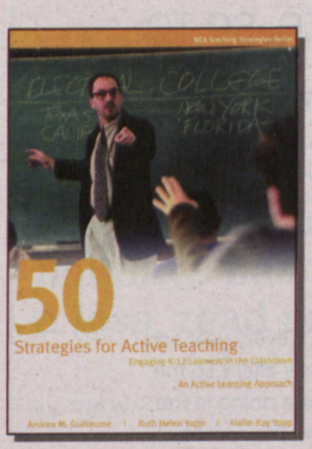
RETHINKING HOLIDAYS FROM AN ANTI-BIAS PERSPECTIVE
http://faculty.weber.edu/rwong/edu3200/Eng-RethinkingHolidays.pdf
Julie Bisson, an early childhood education consultant, explains how early childhood educators can infuse cultural relevancy and inclusiveness with a developmentally appropriate holiday program.



AROUND THE WORLD THROUGH HOLIDAYS: Cross Curricular Readers Theatre. In this fun and innovative book, Carol Peterson has written 12 plays for the classroom, each one about a specific holiday and applicable across the curriculum.

NEED A FEW GREAT APPROACHES TO CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION?

Here are 135 Designed Just for You!



50 Strategies for Active Teaching: Engaging K-12 Learners in the Classroom

Provide a challenging classroom environment for your students by giving them a sense of ownership with their own learning. Fifty strategies are covered in this 263-page book, including: lesson preparation, implementation, alternatives and time allotment. Also includes 32 printable resource templates on CD-ROM.

Non-Member Price: $21.95 + S&H
Member Price: $19.95 + S&H
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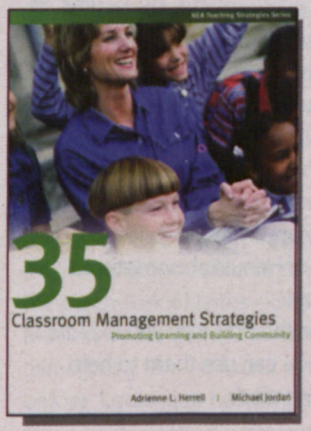

35 Classroom Management Strategies: Promoting Learning and Building Community

Get practical–and effective–strategies for creating a classroom community conducive to learning. See 12 real-life examples on the accompanying DVD.

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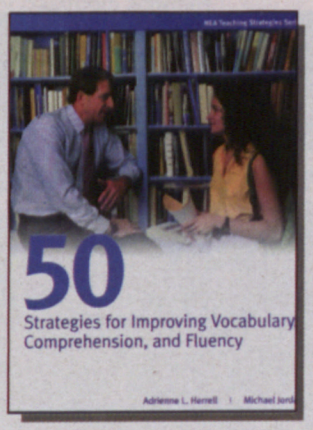
Member Price: $19.95 + S&H
Item #0693-3-00-D



50 Strategies for Improving Vocabulary Comprehension and Fluency

This 246-page second edition offers strategies that work to improve reading skills at all levels, K-12, including English Language Learners. Find two examples for each strategy–one in the text and the other on the accompanying CD.

Non-Member Price: $29.95 + S&H
Member Price: $25.95 + S&H
Item #0692-5-00-D

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BEST BOARDS

Blast Off!

During our "Mission to Mars" unit, students work in flight crews, designing their own flight patches just as the NASA astronauts do. In preparation for their trip, each group must choose their menus, calculate the amount of necessary supplies, and find ways to reduce the weight of these supplies and the amount of waste they produce. They determine their trajectories to Mars and how they will maintain their fitness levels on their long journey and keep healthy. They choose a landing site based on real data and once there, their mission focus. This unit culminates with a simulated launch sequence where students role-play and read from an actual NASA shuttle launch interchange. The activity challenges students to take leadership roles, work as a team, and problem-solve to successfully launch, arrive on Mars, and return in one piece!

JEAN DEMPSEY
Sixth-grade science teacher
Southold, New York

Jungle Music

The third grade just completed a unit where we studied Saint-Saëns' "Carnival of the Animals." First we listen to each piece and then use creative movement to learn about each animal and its musical theme. Then we pick our favorite, make masks from paper plates, and put on a classroom performance to the music of Saint-Saëns.

DENISE BONDI
Elementary school music teacher
Seabrook, New Hampshire

TOP TIPS

HOW CAN I WORK MORE CLOSELY WITH PARENTS?

Parent Newsletters

I send home a weekly newsletter that tells what I am teaching and how often I am teaching it. I describe special days and always include parent tips for at-home follow-up. After reading my newsletter, parents can ask their children specific questions about their day and get specific responses. I also have parent workshops twice a year where I show my parents the methods and materials we use in class. I set up hands-on demos and provide handouts. Parents are grateful to learn my methods and lingo.

DIANE POSTMAN
Kindergarten teacher
Poquoson, Virginia

SEND IT IN

Donald, that is a report card. That is not a "press leak."

SEND US YOUR SNAPS

Your work day is rewarding, hectic, frustrating, and fantastic all at the same time, right? Well a picture is worth a thousand words. Send us your favorite snapshot or two from a day in your life as a teacher or support professional. We plan to publish the best later this year in *NEA Today*.

DEADLINE IS JAN. 31.
GO TO: WWW.NEA.ORG/REF?PHOTOS.

STEAL THIS IDEA!

In Time for World AIDS Day

When teaching the unit on HIV and AIDS, my student teacher and I tell students about the AIDS quilt. We cover the background information and explain what the quilt stands for. The students get their own "quilt piece" (construction paper) and decorate it. Next, we laminate the pieces, sew them together with paper clips, and display the quilts in our classroom. The students really enjoy the lesson and activity.

NATALIE QUEEN
High school health and physical education teacher
Lansing, Michigan

BOARD TOP: JEAN DEMPSEY; BOARD SIDE: DENISE BONDI; LION NOTE: GLOBALP; WOMAN THINKING: PHOTOBANK.CH; CAMERA: LONGHA2006; CLASSROOM: SOMOS/VEER; NOTEBOOK PAPER: CSCREDON; CARTOON: GEORGE B. ABBOTT

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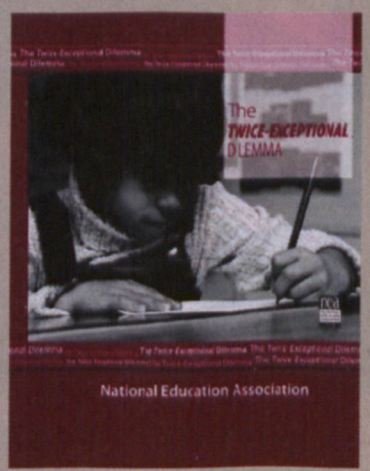

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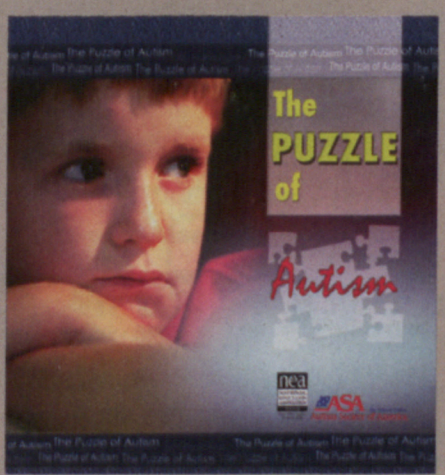

Jack is autistic . . .

The *Puzzle of Autism*

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YOUR HOLIDAY SURVIVAL GUIDE

How to stress less this season

BY GINI KOPECKY WALLACE

With the holidays fast approaching, there's no better time than now to consider ways to make them less taxing and more enjoyable. Experts offer these tips.

EMBRACE THE CHALLENGE. Instead of getting tense just thinking about all you have to do, remember that "good things are stressful," says Scott Bea, a clinical psychologist at Ohio's Cleveland Clinic. That doesn't mean you have to carry the whole load. "You might say to your family, 'We're heading into a stressful period. Let's talk about everyone's expectations and responsibilities and how we can make things go more smoothly.'"

LOWER THE BAR. Believing our celebrations should be perfect is "a huge source of stress," says Judith Sills, a clinical psychologist in Philadelphia. "We measure ourselves against these iconic images, and we fall short. You expect your relatives to gather around the table in a loving way. And, instead, an uncle is drunk, and your daughter's boyfriend is wearing a Hooters hat." Bea's advice: "Remind yourself that nothing ever goes exactly right in real life. Nothing is ever perfect, and it doesn't have to be."

SET LIMITS. If you don't have time to cook the big family dinner, "you're allowed to say no," says Dorothy Cantor, a psychologist in Westfield, New Jersey. The same goes for running around, trying to spend equal time with competitive parents and in-laws, or traveling long distances to obligatory family gatherings. You're permitted to say you can't make it, explain why, and suggest an alternative that works for you, says Cantor.

SCALE BACK. Baking, decorating, and making gifts are fine things to do—if you have time. If not, they can increase stress, says Tim Kasser, associate professor of psychology at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. Concerned that the kids will be disappointed if you skip making the gingerbread house? Professional organizer Brenda McElroy, of Fresno, California, suggests asking family members which traditions they do and don't cherish. "Because you might think something is special, but the kids might say, 'Not really.' If you can identify the

PHOTO: MEIKO ARQUILLOS

non-negotiables, you can make them your priority and ease up on others."

SHIFT FOCUS. Your son doesn't want to wear the tie you gave him to church? Ask yourself what's more important: what he wears or that he goes. "Maybe, this year, in addition to picking traditions, you can pick your battles," says Sills. Bea suggests consciously focusing on everything that goes right instead of wrong. Acknowledging when people please us (thanking your son for attending services) "changes our brain chemistry," says Bea, and constitutes a gift that "makes others feel better in lasting ways."

CURTAIL COMMERCIALISM. In one 2002 study, Kasser and a colleague found that the more people focused on family and religion during the holidays and the less on buying and receiving gifts, the happier they were. Strategies for reducing spending abound: buying only for young children, drawing names, setting spending caps, giving gifts of time or services, donating to charity. Be careful, though. First make sure everyone's on board with the change, or spotty adherence could cause stress. If your whole extended family always exchanges presents, shortening your list could also backfire. Gift-giving affirms ties, says Kasser. You don't have to give lavishly, but you probably "do need to give something." Finally, if you're hoping to receive a certain gift, say so, advises Sills. It's unfair to expect loved ones to read your mind.

COUNT TO 10. Remember, when things get tense, there's a difference between being happy in the moment and feeling you're doing something meaningful. Both are important, says Kasser, "but they involve different processes, and it might be that making meaning is what the holidays are more about." Unpleasant moments will always be part of the mix, says Sills. "It's love, affection, joy, stress, disgruntlement, disappointment. The fact that we can feel all that and still sit down together and celebrate is what makes us family."

Rachael Ray meets Charles Dickens

Want to put a little teacher spin on your holiday gatherings? How about combining your two loves: A good book and an easy-to-make appetizer. If you can spell hors d'oeuvres, you can handle these three recipes.

THE NUTCRACKER: You know the famous ballet, but maybe not the original E.T.A. Hoffman story. (We like the 2001 children's edition illustrated by Maurice Sendak.) With its inspiration, try making spiced nuts. First, beat one egg white until foamy; then add two cups of nuts, a quarter-cup of sugar, and a teaspoon of assorted spices. (Cayenne and cinnamon? Maybe a little cumin?) Spread on a greased baking sheet and bake in a 325-degree oven for about 20 minutes, stirring often.

THE CHRISTMAS CAROL: The Cratchits had a Christmas goose, and so shall you. Try this recipe from About.com—take 8 ounces of fresh foie gras, cut into 1-inch pieces, and sauté in a very hot pan for about 5 minutes. Let cool, then give it a whirl in your food processor while slowly adding a quarter-cup of apple brandy and 8 ounces of room temperature butter. Mix until smooth. Add salt and pepper to taste. Chill for at least two hours and serve with toast and apple slices.

ETHAN FROME: The 10th-grade English teachers at your table might stare for a second and then go, "Oh yeah!" (Everybody else will wonder if you left your mind in your grade book.) Here it is, the most brilliant literary appetizer ever (and certainly the simplest): One plate of pickles and one plate of doughnuts. And let's hope your winter party ends better than theirs.

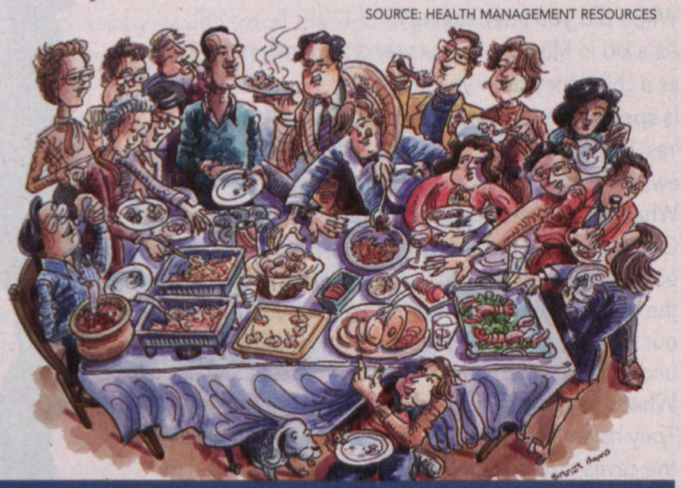
PHOTOS: NUTS: GUY ERWOOD; GOOSE: IVAN IGORSKY; DONUT: JOHN FOXX; PICKLE: DMITRY MELNIKOV; NUTCRACKER: VIVID PIXELS

HOW I... Save the Planet

The holidays may be a perfect time for a service learning project—a little reminder that we don't live alone on this island. This time, your turn. Check out Earthwatch Institute at www.earthwatch.org, an organization that aims to engage people—like you—in scientific research that will help save this planet. On a recent trip for educators only, Sarah Durfee, an Oregon science teacher, put on her waders in the North Cascades of Washington to map and record conditions in streams along the Continental Divide to help find out if they could sustain salmon. "It was one of the most interesting things I've done—and I've previously done a lot of wilderness stuff for work and play," Durfee said. What's more, she can use these lessons in her classroom.

7,100 THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF CALORIES CONSUMED IN THE THANKSGIVING MEAL.

SOURCE: HEALTH MANAGEMENT RESOURCES



Waste Not, Want a lot!

No, you do not need another #1 Teacher mug! You—and your friends and family—already have quite enough stuff. This year, consider a few more charitable gifts that could really make a difference in somebody's life.

Yes, we're biased, but this is one of our favorite feel-good projects. "Beyond Words: The Dollar General School Library Relief Fund," is a collaborative effort between NEA and its partners to rebuild school libraries damaged by disasters like Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. For more information, go to **www.ala.org/aasl/disasterrelief**.

You might have heard of Beatrice Biira, whose life was changed when an American church decided to buy $120 goats from Heifer International (**www.heifer.org**) and send them to families in western Uganda, including Beatrice's. With that goat, her family had a source of income, and they used their milk money to send Beatrice to school. This year, she graduated from Connecticut College.

It's almost time to send holiday cards. Consider buying them from the UNICEF store (**www.unicefusa.org/shop**) where your money goes to support children in crisis around the world. Also, check out their "inspired gifts," where you can purchase life-saving products. You could buy school supplies ($21 to equip 50 kids with the basics), vaccines ($51 to immunize 86 children from polio), and more.

Money, money, money: It's not just what your teenage niece wants. And it might make a bigger difference in the hands of small entrepreneurs in the developing world. At Kiva, **www.kiva.org**, you can read about the borrowers—the baker in Tajikistan, the grocer in Afghanistan—and decide which project you want to help fund. Your money is lent to the borrowers, who repay it and report back on their success.

Or give the other kind of green: At Be Green (**www.begreennow.com**), your gift of green will result in one native tree planted in an ecosystem restoration project in the United States. For $9.95, the recipient also gets an ornament made from seed paper, which she can plant, plus a card telling her about her tree.

And finally, consider giving a gift that you hope you'll never need: An emergency preparedness kit from the Red Cross. The red backpack ($49.95) comes stocked with three-day supplies for one adult: food bars, water, blanket, and first-aid kit. Or consider a direct donation at **www.redcross.org**.

PHOTOS: SALMON: IMAGEZOO; THANKSGIVING MEAL: PETER BONO; KID AND BOOKS: PLUSH STUDIOS; HEIFER.ORG; UNICEF.ORG; KIVA.ORG; BEGREENNOW.COM; REDCROSS.ORG

Robert Childs

EUREKA, CALIFORNIA

High school science teacher, spelunker

When did you start caving?

As a kid in Missouri. If you spend any time in the Ozarks as a child, they draw you in.

Is spelunking the same thing as caving?

Yes, but cavers don't use "spelunking." It kind of takes away from the rebel grunge factor.

What's the scariest thing that's happened while caving?

One time with a student group, a lot of snow unexpectedly melted and filled the cave to within a few inches of the roof. To get out, we had to float on our backs with our faces scraping the surface, then completely duck under the water to get under a row of stalactites.

What's your favorite outdoor adventure movie?

They haven't made it yet. The movie will take place in the caves they've found in photographs of Mars. I'm sure I'm the star.

Malaysia established a national park based on caves you found on an expedition. Tell us about that.

As a result of the great caves that were found on several expeditions to Malaysian Borneo, the Malaysian government formed a large national park abutting Gunung Mulu National Park. It protected the surrounding rainforest, also.

Coolest thing you've ever seen on an expedition?

Imagine taking the most beautiful geode full of crystals that you've ever seen, multiply the numbers and types of crystals by 20, and then expand it to the size of gymnasium. Make those crystal 15 feet long. Just for effect, hang yourself from a rope in the middle of it.

Favorite spot to go caving?

Lechuguilla Cave in New Mexico (Google it!)

Why did you decide to become an NEA member?

To give myself a more powerful voice in government decisions that affect students.

Tracey Wygal

MARTINSBURG, WEST VIRGINIA

Middle school teacher, motivational speaker on fitness

You lost 120 pounds and work hard to keep it off. How do you stay motivated?

My motivation comes from family, friends, and continued improvement and maintenance of my health and body.

What food has been the hardest to give up?

Ice cream is a definite nemesis!

What is your favorite workout routine?

I love to strength train in conjunction with cardiovascular exercise. I just enjoy being in the gym! You can find more of my tips at www.fittracey.com

What has been the best part about losing almost 120 pounds?

Helping and motivating others to start on their own weight loss journey. The improvement of my health, self image, and confidence is a big bonus, too!

Has your weight loss had an impact on your teaching and if so, how?

It's made me more comfortable to step up in front of a group and feel good throughout the day.

How have your students reacted to your weight loss?

They have reacted with excitement, pride, happiness, and support.

Why did you become an NEA member?

I decided to join NEA for professionalism, information, and protection.

SHORT TAKES

Johnny Davis

MOBILE, ALABAMA

Retired

Former high school English teacher Davis has been volunteering for over 16 years, spending most of his free time tutoring. Davis teaches mentally challenged adults survival skills. "The best feeling is seeing the gleam in their eye once they understand something," he says. Davis also remains active in his Association, the Alabama Education Retirees Association. Recently, he helped raise money for a local library. "This community has been good to me, so I want to give back and do whatever I can to help. It's a great way to spend retirement."

Want to see your story on this page? We're looking for members with unique hobbies or interesting ways of passing their time. Drop us a line about your pursuits outside the classroom at ckopkowski@nea.org. And visit www.nea.org/neatoday to vote in November's poll: **What's the biggest source of holiday stress?**

We Want You!

PHOTO TOP: PAUL SWENSON; BOTTOM LEFT: TONY COOPER

resources

52 **Grants & Awards** Make a frog happy—win virtual dissection software.

53 **Take Note** December 10 is Human Rights Day; join the "Every Human Has Rights" international campaign.

54 **In Print** Introduce young students to Jim Thorpe, American Indian sports hero.

54 **Books by NEA Members** Classroom management: identify strengths & weaknesses.

54 **American Education Week** Celebrate American public education. We've got everything you need, including a beautiful downloadable poster.

56 **On the Web** A new online game simulates the ups and downs of running a small business for high school students with the entrepreneurial spirit.

57 **Diversity Calendar** November is American Indian Heritage Month.

58 **Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits** Holiday shopping? Take advantage of members-only offers and discounts.

58 **NEA's Read Across America** Help replenish public school libraries—donate to NEA's Books Across America.

Nominate a Civil Rights Hero for NEA's Human and Civil Rights Awards

THE DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 10 TO SUBMIT POSTMARKED NOMINATION FORMS TO NEA HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS. Know a civil rights hero? Every year, NEA's Human and Civil Rights Awards program honors individuals and affiliates who stand up and defend human and civil rights by expanding education opportunities for minority students and educators and improving intergroup relations in public schools. You're invited to help us keep the legacy alive and participate in the 43rd annual awards by nominating an individual, organization, colleague, or affiliate. Complete your nomination form online at **www.nea.org/annualmeeting/hcrawards/index.html**. Note these important dates:

January/February 2009—Selection of awardees by the NEA Executive Committee, based on recommendations from the Human and Civil Rights Committee.

July 2, 2009—Awards Banquet, San Diego, California.

For more information, contact Sabrina Williams, NEA Human and Civil Rights, 1201 16th St., N.W., Ste. 616, Washington, DC, 20036-3290, or send an email to **sawilliams@nea.org**.

NATIONAL FINANCIAL LITERACY CHALLENGE: THE SEQUEL

In April 2008, high school teachers were invited to save a class period for the first National Financial Literacy Challenge. A new initiative of the President's Advisory Council on Financial Literacy, this recognition program uses a voluntary online test to determine and reward high levels of financial literacy among high school students.

The test involves questions on basic personal finance, taking the average student an estimated 40–45 minutes to complete. In most instances, a computer lab is required. Students scoring in the top 25th percentile of national scores are eligible for recognition from the President's Advisory Council on Financial Literacy.

A revised challenge will be offered from **November 3–26, 2008**. If you participated in the spring 2008 challenge, you will automatically be notified this fall when teacher registration begins. If you are a high school teacher who did not participate and would like to be placed on the teacher distribution list, visit **http://flc.treas.gov/teacherSignUp_future.aspx** to sign up. For information, visit **http://flc.treas.gov/teacher.aspx**. And plan on saving a class period!

GOT ELECTORAL GAME?

The National Student/Parent Mock Election (NSPME) invites students of all ages to develop their own game to simulate registering and casting a first vote. In "Casting Your First Vote," a player will role-play a first-time voter navigating the election system—from voter registration to going to the poll to vote, to casting an absentee ballot or taking advantage of early voting opportunities.

The winner, whether one student or a group working together, will be mentored by Memory Seymour, director of education for Secretary of State Jay Dardenne of Louisiana. Seymour will help the winner(s) take their concept from the drawing board to NSPME's Web site. The winner's classroom will also receive a subscription of *USA Today* for 32 weeks during the school year. Drawing boards outlining a concept for the game should be emailed to **nspme@aol.com** or postmarked by **January 15, 2009**, to P.O. Box 36653, Tucson, AZ, 85740.

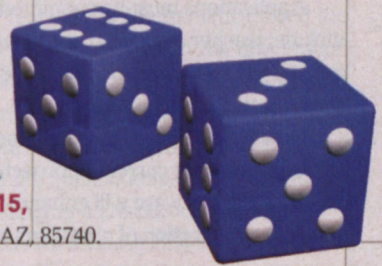


ILLUSTRATION: STOCK.XCHG

CABLE IN THE CLASSROOM LEADERS IN LEARNING AWARDS

This program recognizes outstanding educators, administrators, policymakers, and other community leaders working in schools who are (1) using new ideas and technology to educate and better prepare students; and (2) whose innovative practices have a positive impact on preK–12 education in one of the following categories:

Cable partnerships for learning
Media literacy education
General excellence
Policymaker excellence.

Winners receive a $3,000 cash prize and an all-expenses-paid trip for two to Washington, D.C., in June 2009. While there, recipients will visit with members of Congress and attend a gala event with policymakers, government officials, leaders of the national education community, cable industry executives, and other VIPs.

The deadline for entry is 12 p.m. (noon) PST, **December 17, 2008**. Visit **www.leadersinlearningawards.org** for information.

YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR AWARDS

A program of the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) Young Entrepreneur Foundation, this annual scholarship helps set teen small-business owners on the path to success.

High school seniors entering their college freshman year for the full 2009–10 academic year are eligible to apply. They should demonstrate entrepreneurial spirit by (for example):

Starting a small business such as pet-sitting, skate board/snow board shop, computer repair, e-Bay-based business, etc.
Participating in organizations such as Junior Achievement, etc.
Working part-time at a family-owned or other small business.

Winners receive $1,000 in college tuition assistance. One student receives $10,000 and four regional winners each receive $5,000.

Applications will be accepted until **December 15, 2008**. From these, 1,500 semi-finalists will be selected. Semifinalists are required to submit an essay, high school transcript, and the nomination of an NFIB member by an identified deadline. Visit **www.nfib.com/page/nfibYoungEntrepreneurAward.html** for more information.

KERMIT URGES YOU TO APPLY

The 2009 Froguts Inc. Biology Teaching Enhancement Grant recognizes outstanding efforts of teachers working to enhance biology content presentation; integrate technology into their curriculum; and engage learners to explore biology.

This year, 25 teachers, their students, and their schools will be selected to receive a free one-year subscription to Froguts Virtual Dissection & Labs Software. All K–12 schools may apply.

Applications must be submitted by a teacher/instructor and include: teacher name and school name; number of students who will use the software; and 500-words-or-less describing the use for Froguts Subscription Software. The description should include:

How the software will supplement classroom innovation
Impact on the current approach to dissection and labs
How the software will enhance student learning
A demonstration of classroom and/or school need.

PHOTO: STOCK.XCHG

All entries must be received by 5 p.m. PST on **November 28, 2008**. Submit your application by email to **awards@froguts.com**. Go to **www.froguts.com** for more about its virtual biology software.

TOYOTA TAPESTRY SCIENCE GRANTS

Administered by the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), Toyota Tapestry grants recognize outstanding K–12 teachers who demonstrate excellence and creativity in science education by engaging students in innovative science classroom projects.

This year, 50 large grants of up to $10,000 each and 20–32 mini-grants of up to $2,500 each will be awarded. The categories are physical science application, environmental science education, and integrating literacy and science.

The project director must be either a middle or high school science teacher teaching a minimum of two science classes per day or an elementary teacher who teaches some science in the classroom. All applicants must have a minimum of two years of science teaching experience in a K–12 school, not including the current school year. The project must be implemented during the 2009–10 school year.

The deadline for completing the online application is 11:59 p.m. EST, **January 21, 2009**. For more information and to begin the proposal process, visit **http://tapestry.nsta.org**.

TEAM AMERICA ROCKETRY CHALLENGE

Registration is now open for the world's largest rocket contest, challenging participants to compete for $60,000 in prizes and scholarships and a trip to next year's international air show in Paris.

Participants must design and build a rocket that climbs to 750 feet; stays aloft for 45 seconds; and transports a one-egg payload. The contest gives future engineers the opportunity to demonstrate math and physics skills, work together as a team, and design an aerospace product submitted to the rigors of testing and evaluation. Student teams in grades 7–12 are eligible to compete.

Aerospace Industries Association (AIA) sponsors the contest with the National Association of Rocketry, NASA, the Defense Department, the American Association of Physics Teachers, and other AIA member companies.

Teams have until **December 1, 2008**, to register. April 6 is the deadline to conduct a qualifying launch and earn a trip to the finals, scheduled for May 16 at The Plains, Virginia. The registration fee is $105. For more information, visit **www.rocketcontest.org**.

Take Note

COMPREHENSIVE WEB SITE ADDRESSES INTERNET SAFETY

The NEA Health Information Network (NEA HIN) has developed a Web site that provides educators and parents with tools to help kids use social technologies in a safe and savvy manner. Educators and parents can learn more about the risks and opportunities of social technology to better guide young teens in using it and safely navigating their digital world.

The resource includes Internet safety information; classroom activities; news stories; links; interactive message boards; articles written by educators, parents, experts, and young people; and a variety of Internet-related activities, tools, and resources. Topics cover the spectrum of social technology, from networking sites like MySpace and Facebook to instant messaging (IM), chat rooms, texting, and online gaming.

While you're at the Web site, subscribe to *bNetS@vvy*, a bimonthly e-newsletter about Internet safety authored by educators, parents, experts, and young people. By subscribing, you'll receive information and resources delivered directly to your email inbox.

The Web site is at **www.bnetsavvy.org**. For more information, contact Paul Sathrum at **(202) 822-7787** or **psathrum@nea.org**.

INTERESTED IN ASSOCIATION WORK? APPLY TO THE 2009 NEA AFFIRMATIVE ACTION UNISERV INTERN PROGRAM

As part of an ongoing commitment to state and local affiliates, NEA is seeking potential eligible candidates for the 2009 UniServ Intern Program. Individuals who successfully complete the 4-1/2 week training program and the three-month field experience will be certified by NEA as eligible for UniServ staff work in an NEA state or local affiliate.

All individuals must be committed to relocating for the three-month field experience. Eligible applicants must be or have:

- **An ethnic** minority or female as designated by the U.S. Census
- **An active** NEA member for at least one year
- **Basic** knowledge and understanding of the Association at the local/state level
- **Committed** to pursuing UniServ staff employment upon successful completion of the program
- **Excellent** interpersonal skills
- **Willingness** to participate in intensive training
- **Willingness** to resign all Association positions at the local, state, and national level
- **Willingness** to work in a learning environment during day and evening hours and learn new skills and attitudes.

Applicants should send a letter of interest to: Denard Earl, UniServ Intern Program NEA Affiliate Learning and Effectiveness, 1201 16th St. NW, Washington DC, 20036.

All letters of interest must be received at NEA by **December 8, 2008**, via U.S. Mail or Federal Express. Faxed copies will not be accepted, nor will letters received after the deadline. You will then receive an application packet, which must be completed and returned by **January 31, 2009**. Questions? Call Denard Earl at (202) 822-7620.

Note: The NEA does not guarantee employment of UniServ staff; employment is a state/local decision.

DECEMBER 10—HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

This year's observance marks the 60th anniversary of the United Nations General Assembly's adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—a document establishing a common standard for human achievement for all peoples and nations, rooted in the values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect, and shared responsibility.

Progress has been made in 60 intervening years, but much remains to be done to address human rights, including honoring treaties in place, such as the Geneva Conventions, and ratifying treaties developed to complement the Declaration, including:

- **Convention** on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- **Convention** on the Rights of the Child
- **Convention** on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- **Rome** Statute of the International Criminal Court.

NEA has long supported human rights for all people in the United States and beyond our borders, but what can NEA members actually do to help?

- **Read** the Declaration at **www.unhchr.ch/udhr** (choose from 337 languages)
- **Join** the "Every Human Has Rights" international campaign at **www.everyhumanhasrights.org**
- **Sign** your personal Declaration of Human Rights while you're there, and join a network of people who care.

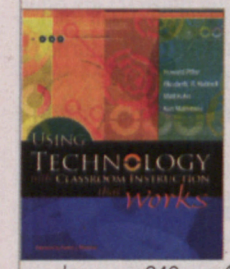
HELP 'TWEENS' MAKE SMART MONEY DECISIONS

Want to bring math skills to life? And help children develop sound saving and spending habits—skills that will help them now, but especially in the future? Check out Feed the Pig for Tweens, a fun, hands-on financial literacy program for grades 4–6 from the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Developed with input from the Teacher Advisory Board through the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Feed the Pig helps children learn about the urgency of saving while building important math skills in a fun and engaging way. Teaching materials, including coursework that reinforces math skills with real-life applications—like tracking expenses and balancing a checkbook—are free to download at **http://feedthepig.org/tweens**.

PHOTO: STOCK.XCHG

In Print

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM



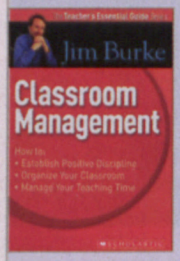
How best to incorporate technology with learning so that it enhances rather than distracts? In *Using Technology with Classroom Instruction that Works*, Howard Pitler, et al, share research-based recommendations that link effective teaching with technology to engage students in cooperative learning, generating and testing hypotheses, and much more. 240 pp. $27.95 from Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Visit www.ascd.org/books.

THERE WAS NOTHING HE COULDN'T DO

One of the most versatile athletes in modern sports, Jim Thorpe won gold medals in the 1912 Olympics, played American football collegiately and professionally, and played professional baseball and basketball as well. *Bright Path: Young Jim Thorpe* by Don Brown recounts Thorpe's early life as a poor Sac and Fox Indian boy growing up in hardscrabble Oklahoma during the late 1800s. His rise to fame, and the obstacles he faced, are depicted in this appealing picture book. Ages 4–8. 40 pp. $17.95 from Roaring Brook Press. Go to www.amazon.com.

BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

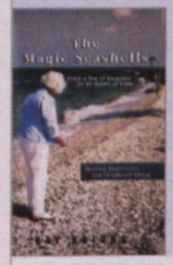
THE TEACHER'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE: CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT



By Jim Burke

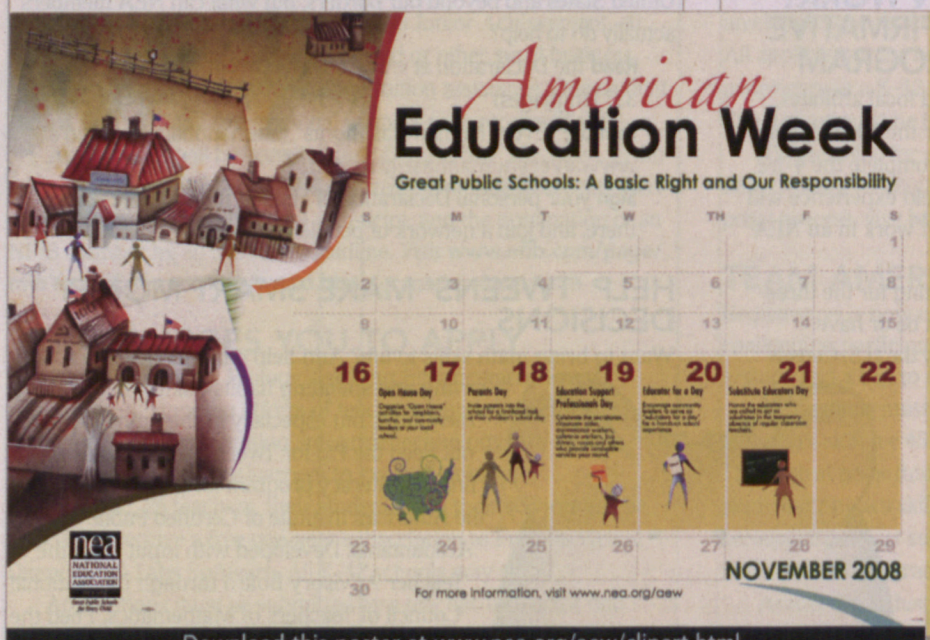
Part of *The Teacher's Essential Guide Series*, this brief but rich handbook offers middle and high school teachers comprehensive advice from a veteran educator. Beginning with a self-assessment checklist to identify your most pressing classroom issues, Burke presents quick strategies for effective group management, handling discipline problems, engaging students in learning based on their strengths, and much more. 112 pp. $15.99 from Scholastic, Inc. To order, go to www.scholastic.com/professional.

THE MAGIC SEASHELLS: HEALING DEPRESSION AND CHILDHOOD ABUSE



By Kay Briggs

This memoir recounts the author's journey in overcoming depression caused by horrific childhood abuse. Frank discussion of her experiences reveals a deeply wounded woman whose honesty and compassion, both for herself and her tormentors, led her to wholeness.155 pp. $17.75 from Briggs Benchmarks. Go to www.amazon.com.



Download this poster at www.nea.org/aew/clipart.html

Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility

November 16–22

For 87 years during American Education Week (AEW), the National Education Association has celebrated extraordinary individuals and achievements in public education. Each day of the week brings a special observance:

Monday: Open House Day
Tuesday: Parents Day
Wednesday: Education Support Professionals Day
Thursday: Educator for a Day
Friday: Substitute Educators Day

To help you plan your activities, we've developed a toolkit containing dozens of activity ideas, proclamations, public service announcements, media tips, artwork, checklists, and much more. Go to **www.nea.org/aew**.

EDUCATION MARKET

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Help protect and refresh your dry clean only clothes. Just 20 Minutes in your home dryer delivers dry-clean-fresh and ready to wear clothing. Call 1-888-890-7991 or visit **www.drycleanerssecret.com** to get a sample or find a retailer near you. Guaranteed to work!

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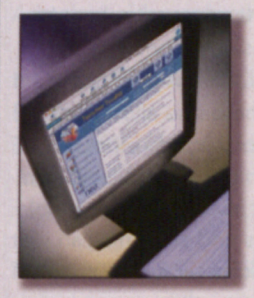
www.ancestry.com

NEA TEACHER TOOLKIT
Tools For Teachers



- Curriculum Tools
- IEP Tools
- Assessment Tools
- Grade Book Tools
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- Performance Tools

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THE Bookstore for Educators

It takes inspiration to keep students motivated and excited to learn. The **NEA Professional Library** has the innovative resources you need to revitalize your classroom. Each title is research-based and designed for application in real classrooms. Whether you're a veteran educator or brand new to the classroom, you'll find materials designed to help you meet the challenges you face every day. To order, call **800-229-4200** or visit us at **www.nea.org/books**.

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nsu@brainsmart.org, www.brainsmart.org

DR. JANET ALLEN'S PLUGGED-IN PROGRAMS

Dr. Janet Allen's Plugged in to Reading™

Plugged-in to Reading is a reading program for middle and high schools authored by adolescent literacy expert, author, and teacher Dr. Janet Allen and published by Recorded Books. Available this year is Plugged-in to Nonfiction, a reading program based on a classroom library of authentic nonfiction. Call 1-800-638-1304 **www.PluggedintoReading.com**

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ARGOSY UNIVERSITY

At Argosy University, we believe that education is an immense responsibility. Our experienced faculty brings that belief to life – using our interactive online classroom to give you the solid, personalized education you need at a time that's convenient for you. Argosy University prepares you with skills necessary to be a leader in today's world of education.

On the Web

RIGHT ABOUT WHAT YOU KNOW

Lots of people blog about education; many of them, frankly, are talking through their hats. When it comes to authenticity, few voices are as reliable as those who actually work in the classroom. *Lesson Plans* is a *New York Times* blog authored by five educators from around the country—including two NEA members—who love their profession and write with wit, eloquence, and passion about what it means to go to work every day and hold their students' lives in their hands. The comments area is populated mostly by fellow educators who share their own stories and others who drop by to thank teachers for their labors. The inspiration is served up at **http://lessonplans.blogs.nytimes.com**.

FOR A LITTLE INSPIRATION

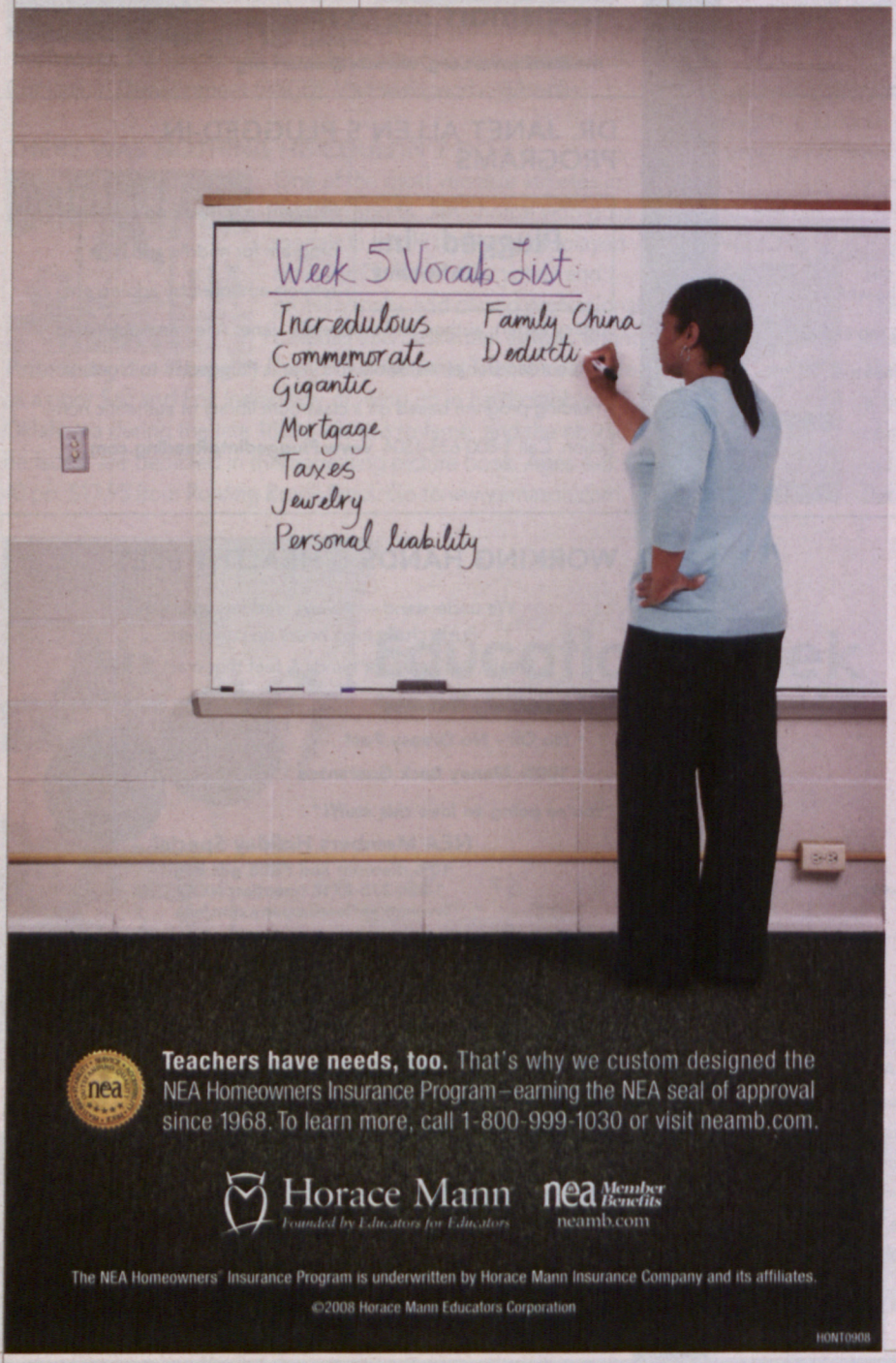
What made you want to teach? Hop over to **www.ed.gov/programs/teacherfellowship/videoquotes.html** to hear Teaching Ambassador Fellows talk about how they started teaching, what they've learned, and why they stay. From there, head to NEA's *I Am an Educator* at **www.nea.org/neatoday/iamaneducator.html** where you'll meet Association members who share what teaching means to them. If you're inspired to tell your own story, you can upload videos to YouTube in an area just for NEA members.

I'M THE BOSS OF ME!

The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) Young Entrepreneur Foundation has created an online computer game to show high school students what it's like to run their own small business. The Johnny Money Online Game is a free, interactive simulation designed to enhance students' exploration of entrepreneurship by introducing them to business concepts and showing them how their decisions impact the bottom line. The game allows any student to aspire to start a business; design it; and learn from the failures and successes inherent in being his or her own boss. Teachers and students can visit **www.johnnymoney.com** to start playing.

ENTER THE GLOBAL CLASSROOM

EPals is the world's largest social networking site dedicated to improving learning for students and teachers. Educators and students worldwide connect online to exchange questions and ideas, collaborate on projects, and build a learning community. To foster this community, ePals offers safe and protected classroom email, blogs, classroom matches, online literacy tools, and mentoring. Everything is Web-based—no special software is required. Go to **www.epals.com/index.tpl** to sign up for free.


Week 5 Vocab List:
Incredulous
Commemorate
Gigantic
Mortgage
Taxes
Jewelry
Personal liability
Family China
Deductible
nea
Teachers have needs, too. That's why we custom designed the NEA Homeowners Insurance Program–earning the NEA seal of approval since 1968. To learn more, call 1-800-999-1030 or visit neamb.com.
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Diversity Calendar

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER—AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

This month we honor the unique heritage of our nation's first inhabitants. Visit Buffy Sainte-Marie's Cradleboard Project, with free curriculum resources, at www.cradleboard.org/main.html.

NOVEMBER 1—ALL SAINTS DAY

Also known as All Hallows or Hallowmas and observed by Roman Catholics and some western Protestant churches, this feast day honors all saints, known and unknown.

NOVEMBER 5—GUY FAWKES DAY

Remember, remember, the 5th of November! Still celebrated in England with fireworks and bonfires, this popular holiday recalls the 1605 foiling of a plot to blow up Parliament.

NOVEMBER 7—MARIE CURIE'S BIRTHDAY

Born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1867, Madame Curie earned degrees in physics and mathematics in Paris at the Sorbonne, and in 1911 won the Nobel Prize in chemistry for her work with radioactivity.

NOVEMBER 11—VETERANS DAY

Originally enacted to commemorate Armistice Day, this holiday was eventually designated to honor all U.S. veterans. Visit *Kids Thank a Veteran*, a member-built site where students can thank American veterans for their service, at www.kidsthankavet.com.

NOVEMBER 12—ELIZABETH CADY STANTON'S BIRTHDAY

Born in 1815, Cady Stanton was a leader in women's suffrage and instrumental in winning the right to vote for women. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/archive/wori/ecs.htm.

NOVEMBER 19—GETTYSBURG ADDRESS ANNIVERSARY

Hailed as one of the greatest speeches in American History, Lincoln delivered his address in1863 at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, during the Civil War. View a draft in Lincoln's own handwriting at the Library of Congress at www.loc.gov/exhibits/gadd.

NOVEMBER 20—MEXICAN REVOLUTION

On this day in 1910, revolutionary Francisco I. Madero denounced President Porfirio Díaz Mori, declared himself president, and issued a call for national insurrection.

NOVEMBER 27—THANKSGIVING DAY

Celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November, this American harvest festival is marked by feasting and giving thanks. For more Thanksgiving history, see www.history.com/minisites/thanksgiving.

Teaching Research Spotlight

If you're interested in what the research says about your profession, visit NEA's online venue highlighting professional research on best practices in educational issues.

November's focus is on **Out-of-Field Teaching**

Learn more at www.nea.org/ref?novresearch

DECEMBER

DECEMBER 1—WORLD AIDS DAY

Established in 1988, this day provides national AIDS programs, faith organizations, community organizations, and individuals with an opportunity to raise awareness of the global AIDS epidemic. Find information and resources at www.worldaidscampaign.org.

DECEMBER 1–5—NATIONAL INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS WEEK

These days highlight the need to provide a supportive, quality education to all students, particularly those who have disabilities or who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This year's theme is *Together We Learn Better: Inclusive Schools Benefit All Children*. Find out more at www.inclusiveschools.org.

DECEMBER 22–29—HANUKKAH

Also known as the Festival of Lights, this eight-day Jewish celebration commemorates the retaking of the Temple in Jerusalem in the 2nd century B.C.E. In remembrance, Jews light a menorah and eat potato pancakes called *latkes*.

DECEMBER 25—CHRISTMAS DAY

Historians date this holiday to the year 336, when Christian leaders met to honor the birth of Christ. Celebrated as a religious and secular event, Christmas is marked by church attendance and gift-giving. Federal and state governments close, as do most businesses.

DECEMBER 26–JANUARY 1—KWANZAA

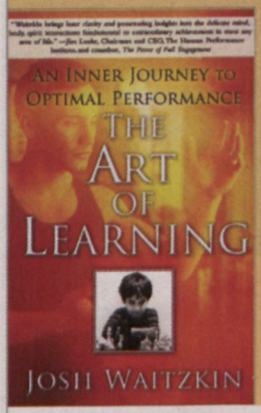
A unique African-American celebration created in 1966, this seven-day festival is dedicated to the principles of unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith, and reinforces connectedness to African cultural identity.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Free Book Giveaway

A MASTER SHARES HIS SECRETS FOR OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE

Josh Waitzkin, eight-time national chess champion, world champion martial artist, and subject of the film *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, has written a book distilling his experience of the road to mastery. Part autobiography, part self-help guide, *The Art of Learning: An Inner Journey to Optimal Performance* enumerates Waitzkin's principles for improving performance in any field. Now, moving beyond the success of his own life, Waitzkin hopes to nurture the individualized learning potential of children and young adults. To that end, his non-profit organization, the JW Foundation, is giving away free copies of the book to educators and schools. Please visit **http://jwfoundation.com/nea** for more information and to submit your book request.



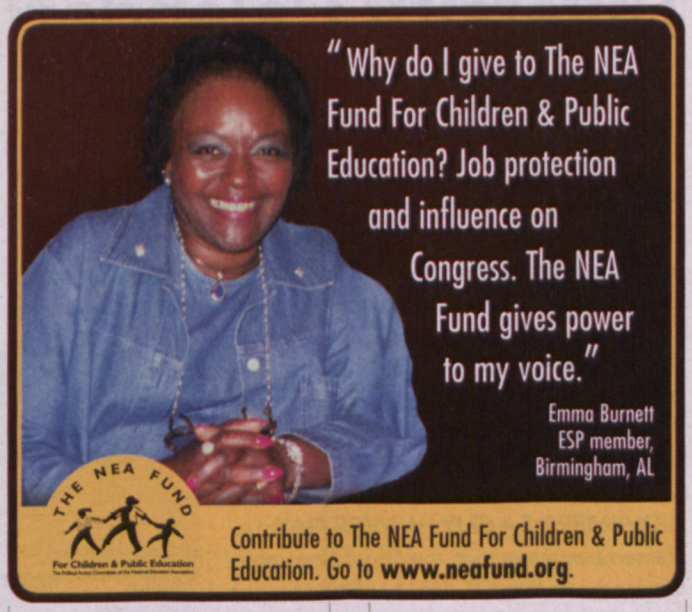
NEA's Read Across America

HELP PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN NEED—DONATE TO NEA'S BOOKS ACROSS AMERICA

It's not easy to spread the joy of reading when you're struggling to buy books for your public school library. That's why we created NEA's Books Across America, so school libraries across the country serving economically disadvantaged students have a chance to stock up on books they need.

How does it work? People who care donate to our Books Across America fund; the monies collected annually fund 50 grants of $1,000 each to public school libraries. (Meet this year's winners at **www.neafoundation.org/BAAawards2008.htm**.)

Interested in helping? There are many ways—be creative in your fundraising. Whether it's a challenge to your local shopping mall, a bake sale in your backyard, a "run for reading" race, or just a hand-written check, your efforts, big and small, will help this worthy cause. For more information, go to **www.nea.org/booksacross**.


"Why do I give to The NEA Fund For Children & Public Education? Job protection and influence on Congress. The NEA Fund gives power to my voice."
Emma Burnett
ESP member,
Birmingham, AL
THE NEA FUND
For Children & Public Education
Contribute to The NEA Fund For Children & Public Education. Go to www.neafund.org.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

SPREAD A LITTLE *SAVINGS CHEER!*

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON you'll benefit from special offers available only to NEA members. Conserve your hard-earned dollars, but still delight the important people in your life!

NEA CLICK & SAVE—50,000 NEA MEMBERS CAN'T BE WRONG

THE HOTTEST shopping site around is the one built expressly for NEA members and their families. Through NEA Click & Save, you can save on products from hundreds of retailers and online merchants. Choose from gourmet food and flowers, travel and vacation deals, entertainment tickets, home décor and electronics, sports and wellness products, a huge array of apparel, and lots more! Shop early and easily—go to **www.neamb.com/clickandsave**!

THE NEA MAGAZINE SERVICE—50 GIFT IDEAS FOR $10 OR LESS

GIVE A GIFT that educates, informs, and entertains—at a great price! For a limited time, order a year-long subscription to *Instructor*, *Woman's Day*, *Parents*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, or more than 45 other titles and pay only $10 or less! Plus, save 75 percent on *The Economist*, 80 percent on *Smithsonian*, 93 percent on *Newsweek*, and up to 85 percent on more than 1,000 magazines with your NEA Member discount. Treat yourself, your family members, and friends. Visit **www.neamag.com/take5** or call **(800) YOUR MAG** toll free to place your order.

PHOTO BOTTOM LEFT: LEN SPODEN

NOVEMBER WEB SITE GIVEAWAY

Register to win the NEA Member Benefits Monthly Web Site Giveaway!

...a chance to win one of two
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CONFESSIONS OF A CHEATER

I wasn't very good at it, but I tried.

BY REA KILLEEN CASSIDY

WHEN I WAS IN SECOND GRADE, I cheated. I didn't cheat on my work—that, I flunked honestly. What I didn't do honestly was talk to my parents. Instead, I forged my mother's signature. Twice.

The first time, I parked myself on the braided rug in my living room and studied the roundness of her letters: the sturdy "N" in her "Nancy," the chubby "a" and the wide "y." I must have spent an hour practicing my "N" and "a" before I finally put my pen to the line and began a swirling and energetic imitation.

Two days later, my mother and the teacher talked with me about "honesty" and "responsibility." After apologizing, I was sent out into the hall, where I listened to whispered exchanges and imagined places that would accommodate a dishonest and irresponsible fugitive.

Rea Killeen Cassidy cheated because she thought grownups were perfect. Today, she often proves they're not.

> "Luckily, these days I make a lot of mistakes."

The second time, I smartened up. With scissors, I neatly (or as neatly as a second-grader could manage) cut out my mother's actual signature from a previously signed paper. I took my sticky bottle of Elmer's rubber glue and pasted the strip of paper on the line above "Parent's Signature." There, I thought. That ought to do it.

"What were you thinking, young lady?" my mother asked, exasperated. "Why in the world would you do this? Again!"

"I dunno," I replied. And I didn't.

Were my parents putting subtle pressure on me to succeed? Not likely. Our family had five kids, two dogs, dependent elderly relatives, and chronic illnesses, all of which kept my parents occupied.

No, for whatever reason, I was putting the pressure on myself.

The cheating story returns to me every now and then when I look at the 110 beautiful faces of the students I teach. I see kids who are eager to please, willing to shoulder their heavy backpacks brimming with books and hours of homework. While these students are all honest, hardworking kids, I cannot help but worry that they will create their own self-pressure cookers.

A few years ago, I polled my students about their number one fear. Their answer: failure. With the rigorous demands of the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework and the formidable competition for college admissions, kids today experience more pressure than anything we endured.

It's no wonder some kids sneak peeks at each other's quizzes and plagiarize paragraphs from other students' essays. And it's no wonder that many parents, myself included, struggle with the distinction between helping our kids understand their work and doing it for them.

I look at my children and my students and I want to tell them, "Relax. You're going to be just fine." And I have found one sure way adults can help kids relax: let them see you make mistakes. When I was in second grade, my parents seemed perfect. I had never seen them fail at anything and to let them see me fail was, well, unbearable.

Luckily, these days I make a lot of mistakes. At school, I type the wrong date at the top of quizzes, copy the wrong vocabulary lists, correct students without knowing the whole story. At home, I can be cranky, spacey, and downright demanding.

"Oops," I say. "I'm having a day. I'm sorry kids." And then, when my kids are having tough days, I remind them of my own. "Don't you remember when I...." If we want honest kids, we have to be honest adults. We have to let them see us succeed and fail.

It may help to remember our own relationship with our parents. As young children, we loved our parents, whom we thought of as perfect. But as adults, most of us love our parents even more, not because they are perfect, but because they are imperfect, human, just like us.

Rea Killeen Cassidy teaches seventh-grade English in Hingham, Massachusetts.

PHOTO: MILLER STUDIO

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